





## EU sees Malta forum as helping Middle East

TUNIS (R) — The European Union (EU) council of ministers' chairman said on Tuesday that Arab states who plan to freeze ties with Israel will not boycott a Mediterranean meeting in Malta this month that the Jewish state will attend.

Hans van Mierlo, who is also Dutch foreign minister, told reporters in Tunis: "We are very happy that the Arab states decided last night to take part in the Malta conference. There was a danger that the Middle East issue causes a problem. It is not the case ... we are relieved."

Ministers from the EU and the south Mediterranean, including Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, the Palestinian National Authority and Israel are due to meet in Malta on April 15 and 16 to assess progress in the Euro-med partnership agreed in Barcelona in 1995.

Arab-Israeli relations have plummeted since Israel started building a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem. On Monday the Arab League recommended freezing links with Israel and reactivating a trade boycott.

But Mr. Van Mierlo said of the freeze of relations with Israel: "I must say that I do not understand the sense of this. I confess that it is not up to me to say what to do ... if this helps restart the peace process, I would agree. But I have doubts."

"We regret the deadlock in the Middle East peace process. We will do all what we can to have it restart, though our means are limited ... What I hope is that the Malta conference will influence positively the peace process," he said.

He confirmed that Syria and Lebanon as well as Israel and the Palestinian National Authority would attend the conference.

Mr. Van Mierlo was speaking after talks with his Tunisian counterpart Abdul Rahim Zouari on cooperation between the EU and Tunisia, which was the first Mediterranean country to sign a free trade zone accord with the EU in 1995.

Mr. Van Mierlo earlier visited Algiers, where he held talks with Algerian President Liamine Zeroual on cooperation with Algeria ahead of the Malta forum.

"For us, Algeria is very important as a partner but also because we share together the responsibility of the Malta conference as co-sponsors," Mr. Van Mierlo said.

Algeria is spokesman for the Arab group involved in the Barcelona partnership. The EU delegation also held talks with Algerian officials on Algeria's negotiations with the EU on an association accord which will open the Algerian economy to competition in a Mediterranean free zone by the year 2010, the Algerian state-run radio said.

Mr. Van Mierlo said the EU was looking with interest to Algeria's June 5 parliamentary elections "because political stability would result in improved security."

The EU delegation, which includes European commission Vice-President Manuel Marin, started its tour in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and was due to hold talks in Malta on Wednesday and in Egypt and Turkey on Thursday to prepare the Malta conference, officials said.

## Annan, Denktash to meet in Geneva

NICOSIA (R) — United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan will meet Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash in Geneva next week, the U.N. resident envoy on the divided island said on Wednesday.

Mr. Denktash, head of the breakaway state in northern Cyprus recognised only by Ankara, is meeting the U.N. chief as an intensive round of consultations are under way for the resumption of direct talks between the two sides later this year.

"We are shooting (for talks) in the middle of the year and there is no specific date," the chief of mission of U.N. forces in Cyprus, Gustave Feissel, told reporters after meeting with President Glafcos Clerides, the Greek Cypriot leader.

Mr. Feissel said he would give the secretary-general an "assessment of the way things are going" on the proximity talks, which started in early March.

Leaders of Cyprus' two communities, divided since Turkey invaded the northern third in 1974 after a coup sponsored by Athens, have not met since October 1994.

The United Nations, which has had a peacekeeping force stationed in Cyprus since 1963, and a small army, of mediators have been trying for decades to reunite the island under a federal umbrella, without any noteworthy results.

The U.N. has indicated it wants to see both sides make "goodwill gestures" to the other to improve the climate for talks, soured after the killings of three Greek Cypriots on the ceasefire line by Turks or Turkish Cypriots, and the shooting of a Turkish Cypriot security guard between August and October last year.

Mr. Feissel refused to specify what the U.N. Expected from the two sides.



**FIREBOMB HITS ISRAELI ARMY BUS:** An injured Israeli soldier clutches his M-16 rifle as he is wheeled from an ambulance into hospital on Wednesday. The soldier was among 14 soldiers wounded when their bus was hit by a petrol bomb thrown in the West Bank. The bus went off the road after the petrol bomb exploded and then rolled some 20 metres. A Palestinian fire truck arrived and doused the flames (Reuters photo)

## 3,800 candidates for Yemeni elections

SANAA (AFP) — The Yemeni authorities said Wednesday that they have registered nearly 3,800 candidates for the legislative elections scheduled for April 27, the first universal suffrage ballot since the 1994 civil war.

The electoral commission, which is organising the elections, said 77 percent of the 3,789 candidates, including 17 women, are independents and the remaining 23 percent are running under a party banner.

Political officials said the number of independent candidates could drop by 50 percent by the time the official lists are published in the next few days.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC) and the Islamist party Al Islah, the two ruling parties, will field 242 and 233 candidates respectively.

The opposition Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), which led South Yemen until its

unification with the North in 1990, is boycotting the elections which it says are being carried out "in an abnormal atmosphere" marked by the absence of "national reconciliation."

The YSP shared power in the united republic with the GPC and Al Islah until the civil war when it tried to bring back the former Marxist republic.

During the previous legislative elections April 27, 1993, some 4,810 candidates registered but 1,629 candidates withdrew from the race by the time the electoral campaign officially opened April 17.

A total of 2,300 polling stations are to be set up for this month's polls in 301 constituencies under the monitoring of international observers.

Some 4.6 million voters are expected to take part.

## Iranian intellectual: Islam and human rights go together

NEW YORK (AP) — One of Iran's most controversial philosophers made a rare public speech in the United States on Tuesday, saying open debate and human rights should be integral parts of Muslim society.

Abdolkarim Soroush, a lecturer at Tehran University, shared some of the views Monday that have made him a frequent target of attacks and harassment in Iran, as well as a source of debate in many parts of the Muslim world.

Mr. Soroush considers the Holy Koran to be God's word. But he also holds the unorthodox belief that its

interpretation evolves depending on the time, place and circumstances in which it is read.

Mr. Soroush also says all believers are entitled to their understanding of Islam, a potentially explosive viewpoint in a society effectively run by a class of religious leaders.

"There is no official interpretation of Islam. There is no authoritative interpretation," he said.

Such issues as democracy and human rights did not exist in early Islamic society. But today, they are popular ideas that are compatible with Islam, Mr. Soroush

said. "A religion oblivious to human rights is not tenable in the modern world," he said. "Extra-religious debates must be viewed as worthy, useful exchanges in Islamic society."

Mr. Soroush is in the United States on a speaking tour sponsored by several universities and local Iranian communities.

The soft-spoken, British-educated intellectual was an ideologue of the Islamic regime in the 1980s. But the questions he has raised in recent years have made him both one of the most beloved and reviled figures in modern Iran.

Students are said to flock to his lectures and eagerly read his writings. He also is an inspiration to many other liberal thinkers.

At the same time, many within the country's Islamic power structure feel threatened by him. He has been beaten and injured at least twice, harassed by pro-government militants and occasionally forced to cancel lectures.

Mr. Soroush said people should not be threatened by his views, but that Muslim society should take both "revelation and reason" into account when setting laws.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Sudanese woman convicted of killing 8 children

KHARTOUM (AFP) — A Sudanese court has found a woman guilty of murdering eight children and left her fate in the hands of the victims' families, a newspaper reported here Wednesday. Hanan Zakariya, a Christian from the south Kordofan region, will either be pardoned, sentenced to death or ordered to pay "blood money" depending on the relatives' decision, the Alwan daily said. Zakariya confessed to murdering and mutilating the children in the Sudanese capital Khartoum in 1994. She was caught in March 1994 in a deserted building with the body of her last victim. The court announced its verdict Monday.

### Lebanon hangs convicted murderer

BEIRUT (AP) — An Egyptian man convicted of a double murder was hanged at dawn Wednesday in Lebanon's fifth execution in less than three weeks. A Beirut criminal court in February sentenced Hassan Atiyeh, 41, to death for the 1992 murder of a couple in their eighties. The court said Atiyeh beat the man to death with a sharp metal object and strangled his wife before throwing their bodies in a nearby well. The motive for the double murder was said to be robbery. Atiyeh had told the court that he was innocent and that he had witnessed two people murdering the couple. Atiyeh was hanged in the courtyard of Robmeh prison, the country's main penitentiary, at 4:45 a.m. (01:45 GMT). He was led to the gallows on a stretcher because he broke his leg two months ago when he lived to escape from the officials said. It was the twelfth execution since Lebanon reinstated the death penalty in 1994 in a bid to stem rising violence after the 1975-90 civil war.

### Egypt produces its first drone

EGYPT (AP) — Egypt has built its first military reconnaissance drone, the Al Ahram daily reported Wednesday. The Saham-1, or arrow, will be used by Egypt's armed forces for aerial photography. Israel is a major producer of sophisticated drones. Iraq and Iran are believed to have produced less advanced versions of the spy craft. Egypt already builds tanks, heavy artillery and armoured personal carriers and plans to produce helicopters.

### King Fahd finances Chechen pilgrims

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi King Fahd will pay for 1,000 Muslims from Chechnya to make the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi officials said Wednesday. "This year King Fahd will welcome 1,000 Chechen Muslims who will make the pilgrimage at his expense," Religious Affairs Minister Abdullah Turki said. The gesture is to demonstrate the king's concern for Muslims worldwide, added Mr. Turki in comments carried by the Saudi press. King Fahd will also pay for 500 Bosnian Muslims to travel to Saudi Arabia for the pilgrimage, which takes place in mid-April this year.

## Iran congratulates Arabs on freeze in Israel relations

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran on Wednesday praised the Arab League for recommending its members to freeze ties with Israel, but criticised it for supporting the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in a territorial dispute with the Islamic republic.

"Iran, as the flag bearer for the liberation of Jerusalem and the rights of the Palestinian nation, supports any move in this direction," Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi said.

"We are pleased with the Arab League's recent stand and believe it will lead to Islamic solidarity," he said, quoted by Iran's official IRNA news agency.

## '4 Iranians in Israeli jails'

NICOSIA (AFP) — Four Iranians kidnapped 15 years ago in Lebanon and long given up for dead are alive and being held in an Israeli jail, an Israeli human rights activist said Wednesday.

"I have confirmation from the Israeli side that these four Iranians have been detained in Israeli prisons for at least two years," said Ahmad Habiballah, director of a Nazareth-based Prisoners' Rights Association.

"I know that these are the four men kidnapped in Lebanon," he told AFP in a telephone interview. The four Iranians are Mohsen Mussavi, who was the charge d'affaires at Iran's embassy in Beirut, diplomat Ahmad Motevasselian, embassy driver Taghi Rastegar-Moghaddam and a photographer for the official

Iranian news agency, Kazem Akhava.

The four were kidnapped on July 4, 1982 at a road-block held by the Lebanese forces militia north of Beirut.

In November 1990, the militia's chief Samir Geagea told relatives of the four that they were killed shortly after their kidnapping on the orders of the movement's intelligence chief Elie Hobeika, who is now a Lebanese government minister.

Mr. Habiballah said lawyers working with his association were drawing up a legal petition to force Israeli authorities to reveal information about the Iranians.

"The Israelis confirmed that they are holding them, but they refuse to say in which prison," he said.

## JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

### PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 .....Ovide & the Gang  
14:30 .....Raw Footage  
14:45 .....Curiosity Show  
15:10 They Came From Outer Space  
16:00 .....N.B.A. Basketball  
17:00 .....Out of This World  
17:30 .....French Programmes  
19:30 .....News Headlines  
19:35 .....Parenthood  
20:00 .....Cinema, Cinema  
20:30 The American Chart Show  
21:10 .....Kung Fu-The Legend  
22:00 .....News in English  
22:25 Feature Film: Barbarians at the Gate  
23:59 .....Tarata

### PRAYER TIMES

03:59 .....Fajr  
05:18 .....(Sunrise) Dhuhr  
11:39 .....Dhuhr  
15:12 .....Asr  
18:00 .....Maghreb  
19:17 .....Isha

### CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifeth, Tel. 810740  
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 637785  
St. Joseph Church Tel. 634590  
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440  
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757  
Terra Santa .....622366  
Anglican Church Tel. 652826  
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

## JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

### Armenian Orthodox Church

Tel. 773261  
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

### Amman International Church

Tel. 827126  
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328

### German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 845457  
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

### Church of Nazareth Tel.

675691  
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

### English-speaking

Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

### WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology  
Temperatures are expected to drop and humidity to rise. Skies will be partly cloudy, winds northwesterly moderate to active with a chance of occasional showers. On Friday, temperatures will drop further, skies cloudy to partly cloudy, and winds northwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be warm, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

### AMMAN

Amman .....11/19  
Aqaba .....16/26  
Deserts .....09/22

### Jordan Valley

15/25  
Yesterday's high temperatures:  
Amman 26, Aqaba 29 Humidity  
readings: Amman 24 per cent,  
Aqaba 25 per cent.

### USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY  
AMMAN:  
Dr. Khalil Abu Marjoub 779797  
Dr. Mazen Nball .....830435  
Dr. Fayer Dabbas .....799155  
Dr. Adnan Zaghou .....898140  
Firas pharmacy .....661912  
Ferdows pharmacy .....778336  
Al Asema pharmacy .....637055  
Nairoukh pharmacy .....623672  
Al Salam pharmacy .....636730  
Yacoub pharmacy .....644945  
Shmeisani pharmacy .....637660  
Najib pharmacy .....847632

### IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qanu .....281484  
Al Quds pharmacy .....(—)  
ZARQA:  
Dr. Mazen Saffarini .....985832  
Khalil pharmacy .....985417

### EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre .....637111  
Civil Defence Department .....661111  
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue .....634343  
Rescue Police 192 .....621111  
637777  
Fire Brigade .....617101

### HOSPITALS

AMMAN:  
Husseini Medical Centre .....813813/32  
Khalidi Maternity .....644281/6  
Jahid .....2441/2  
642362  
Malhas, J. Amman .....636140  
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

### Blood Bank

775121  
Highway Police .....843402  
Traffic Police .....896390  
Public Security Department .....630321

### Hot Complaints

Price Complaints .....661176  
Water and Sewerage Complaints .....897467  
Amman Municipality Complaints .....787111  
Telephone Information (directory assistance) .....121  
Overseas Calls .....010230  
Central Amman Telephone Repairs .....623101  
Abdali Telephone Repairs .....661101

### Jordan Television

773111  
Radio Jordan .....774111  
Water Authority .....680100  
Jordan Electricity Authority .....815615  
Electric Power Company .....636381

### RJ Flight Information

08-53200  
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

### Shmeisani Hospital

669131  
University Hospital .....845845  
Al-Muasher Hospital .....667227/9  
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37  
Al-Ahli, Abdali .....664164/6  
Italian .....777101/3

### Al-Bashir

775111/26  
Army Marks .....891611/15  
Queen Alia Hospital .....602240/50  
Amal Hospital .....674155  
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery .....865199

### ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital .....09/983323  
Zarqa National Hospital .....09/900560  
Ibn Sina Hospital .....09/986732  
Al Hikma Modern Hospital .....09/990990

### IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital .....02/275555  
Greek Catholic Hospital .....02/272275  
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital .....02/247100

### AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital .....03/314111  
FOR THE TRAVELLER  
QUEEN ALIA  
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

### AIRPU:

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ), information department at the Queen

### Alia International Airport Tel.

(08)53200 where it should always be verified.  
Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08(53250).

### ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights  
08:50 .....Sanaa, Aqaba (RJ)  
09:30 .....New Delhi (RJ)  
09:30 .....Bombay (RJ)  
09:50 .....Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)  
09:55 .....Muscat, Dubai (RJ)  
10:00 .....Calcutta (add) (RJ)  
10:05 .....Beirut (RJ)  
10:30 .....Colombo (RJ)  
16:10 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

### DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights  
06:20 .....Beirut (RJ)  
06:45 .....Moscow (RJ)  
10:30 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Alin (RJ)  
11:25 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)  
11:10 Amsterdam, Montreal, Toronto (RJ)  
11:30 .....Rome (RJ)  
12:00 .....Rome, Paris (RJ)  
12:20 .....London (RJ)  
12:20 .....Athens (RJ)  
18:00 .....Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
20:10 .....Cairo (RJ)  
20:15 .....Bahrain, Doha (RJ)  
20:20 .....Laranea (RJ)  
21:00 .....Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
21:15 .....Jeddah (RJ)  
21:50 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)  
22:00 .....Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
01:50 .....Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
02:00 .....Jeddah (add) (RJ)

### Other Flights

03:00 .....Athens (OA)  
05:15 .....Istanbul (TK)  
07:45 .....Beirut (ME)  
13:30 .....Riyadh (SV)  
13:45 Bahrain, Abu Dhabi (GF)  
14:30 .....Al 'Alin (AH)  
16:00 .....Rome (AZ)  
17:15 .....Dubai, Damascus (EK)  
21:25 .....Cairo (MS)  
22:50 .....Tel Aviv (LY)

### Royal Wings (RW) Flights

09:50 .....Marka (RW)  
20:50 .....Aqaba (RW)

### HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday  
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday  
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday  
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

### MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple .....700/500  
Banana .....600/600  
Banana (imported) .....980/600  
Cabbage .....130/80  
Carrot .....200/120  
Cauliflower .....200/100  
Cucumber (large) .....230/100  
Cucumber (small) .....350/200  
Eggplant .....230/100  
Garlic .....1550/600  
Grape fruit .....180/120  
Lemon .....550/250  
Marrow (large) .....220/130  
Marrow (small) .....380/200  
Onion (green) .....220/180  
Onion (dry) .....380/180  
Peas .....560/300  
Pepper (hot) .....800/650  
Pepper (sweet) .....650/350  
Potato .....370/200  
Radish .....150/60  
Spinach .....240/150  
String beans .....1050/700  
Tomato .....420/220



## Japan to grant JD 46m to Jordanian tourist sector

AMMAN (J.T.) — Japanese Ambassador to Jordan Takayuki Kimura Wednesday stated that his country is allocating JD 46 million to Jordan in grants to help finance the first phase of a tourist development project by the year 2000.

Subsequent to a meeting with Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Aqel Biltaji, the ambassador affirmed that Japan will continue to provide financial and technical assistance to the Kingdom in order to help modernise the tourism industry.

Ambassador Kimura maintained

that the Japanese government has sent a team of experts to Jordan to help prepare a national strategy on tourism which goes through to the year 2010.

Mr. Kimura also affirmed that Japanese experts have prepared plans for the ministry to implement the first phase of the project which entails the creation of a national museum at Ras Aj Ain, the development of the Salt and Karak archaeological sites, a Dead Sea route and the Dead Sea panorama.

He confirmed Japan's willingness to provide funds for the execution of

later stages of tourism industry development plans.

Following the meeting, Mr. Biltaji was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as asserting that the two reviewed Jordan's plans for promoting tourism and tourist facilities.

He stressed that work is underway for the training of personnel in the tourism industry.

Mr. Biltaji opined that the advent of peace in the Middle East as well as regional stability and security would benefit the tourism in the Kingdom.

## Muta, German foundation pledge cooperation

AMMAN (J.T.) — Muta University and the Friedrich-Eber Stiftung Foundation Wednesday concluded a memorandum on scientific cooperation, according to a joint statement issued after the signing of the memorandum.

Under the memorandum, the two sides pledged to engage in joint activities to develop the social and economic environment of southern Jordan.

The memorandum, signed by Muta University President Eid Dahiyat and the German foundation's representative in Amman, Manfred Haack, said that Muta University is eager to enhance Jordanian economic and development plans in the south and to provide this area with highly-trained manpower as well as new technologies and skills.

The German non-governmental foundation plans to support these efforts and initiatives aimed at improving living conditions and strengthening economic achievements, it said.

Under the memorandum, the two sides are stated to prepare and implement projects such as:

- conducting comprehensive surveys in the south to diagnose problems facing local communities and presenting the collected data to

decision makers.

- forming awareness campaigns in the south with the participation of representatives of private enterprises and public institutions

- holding workshops and other events to improve the socio-economic status of various southern areas.

- exchanging scientific knowledge between Jordanian and German experts.

## Official neither confirms nor denies claim that Kingdom offered compensation to Israeli families

By Lola Keilani  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Minister of State for Information Dr. Samir Mutawi Wednesday maintained that he could neither confirm nor deny a claim by a Jordanian opposition leader that the Kingdom has paid \$300,000 to each Israeli family which lost a child in the Bagoura attack last March.

"I, like everybody else, read about the claim in the tabloid press," Dr. Mutawi told the Jordan Times. "Since I have no knowledge of such compensation, I could neither confirm nor deny the claim."

The Israeli embassy in Amman also claimed no knowledge as to the reported compensation.

"There has been no money channelled to the families through any official government institutions," said Shalom Toungman, press spokesman of the Israeli embassy.

Leith Shbeilat, president of the Engineers Association and a strong opponent of both the peace treaty and normalisation of Jordanian-Israeli ties, told a press meeting Saturday, that Jordan paid \$300,000 to each Israeli schoolgirl killed by Jordanian soldier, Ahmad Dakamseh, in the March 13 attack.

Mr. Shbeilat did not reveal his source of information, but criticised the government for paying the sum to the Israeli

families, while political activists who last week organised a visit to present JD 1,000 to the soldier's family had to "evade three security nets."

An eight-member group from the "Jordanian Popular Committee for the Defence of Soldier Ahmad Dakamseh" organised a visit last Saturday, to Mr. Dakamseh's village Ebdar. The committee delivered donations it had collected from sympathisers.

The committee was headed by Najib Rashdan, current president of the Arab Human Rights Organisation in Jordan, and joined by former Prime Minister Ahmad Obeidat, Islamic Action Front (IAF) Deputy Hamman Sa'id, former Deputy Riyadh Nawayseh and Mr. Shbeilat.

Mr. Shbeilat, an independent Islamist, said that the "Dakamseh family and the whole village are under tight security" and that "the committee had to slip the amount to the soldier's family as they were scared the security forces would confiscate [the money]."

In November of last year, the King drove Mr. Shbeilat in his own car from Swaga prison to Mr. Shbeilat's mother's house. It was the second time Mr. Shbeilat was pardoned by the King.

Mr. Shbeilat served seven months in jail in 1996 for lese majeste before His Majesty King Hussein ordered his

release.

Meanwhile, a Jordan Armed Forces source yesterday dismissed a statement, issued ten days ago by various associations, including a Jordan Bar Association (JBA) source, asserting that corporal Ahmad Dakamseh was mistreated and that he is not expected to have a fair trial.

"Allegations that the accused corporal, Ahmad Dakamseh, has been threatened or intimidated are flagrant and directed at the military judiciary and the soldiers' honour, something which calls for legal accountability ... the accused has been fairly treated and has faced neither intimidation nor threats nor pressure ... the accused lawyer and his relatives who have visited him ... have arrested [that Mr. Dakamseh] was receiving suitable treatment," the military source said.

"The accused soldier, Ahmad Dakamseh, will receive a fair and open trial as has always been the case with the military judiciary in full implementation of the Jordanian laws," he said.

The JBA statement maintained that the accused is innocent until proven guilty and it demanded that Mr. Dakamseh be given a fair trial.

It alleged that the former corporal was intimidated and threatened and that Israelis were involved in the investigation.

release.

"A fair trial implies a fair investigation, which cannot be achieved without the presence of a defence lawyer. As such, any procedure without the presence of lawyers contradicts democracy ... and the sovereignty of the law which ... [is more than] mere verbiage," the JBA statement said.

It also described any confession or interrogation regarding the soldier as "null and void" and demanded judicial respect as well as an open trial for the soldier.

"The accused soldier is a child of the Jordan Armed Forces which is known to have always treated its own in a manner befitting their dignity and pride either in the battlefield or in court," the military spokesman emphasised.

The Jordan military judiciary is fully committed to all rules and legislation which ensure justice, he said.

"The law has ruled that military prosecution and military investigation can only be conducted by officers from the Jordan Armed Forces and the law bans any foreigner from participating in these procedures," the military spokesman added.

"The military judiciary is fully committed to applying all laws governing trials," he said. "Any violations of the law should be contested in a court of law and not in the media."

## 'Jordan requires \$540m in agricultural investments to achieve self-sufficiency'

By Ghaila Alul  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A minimum of \$540 million must be invested in the Kingdom's agricultural sector between 1997 and 2010 in order to achieve self-sufficiency in food production, according to Regional Information Officer at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Michael Hage.

"Agricultural development cannot be addressed without working to increase investments in the agricultural sector," he told a press conference on Wednesday.

Director for the Development of High Lands at the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad Abu Mishref told reporters that the ministry has developed a national agricultural strategy for the year 2010 to achieve food security in the Kingdom, combat hunger, alleviate poverty and increase food production.

He described the strategy as targeted towards activating the role of rural women in agricultural development as well as creating national awareness regarding the concept of food security.

Mr. Abu Mishref added that the ministry has submitted a request to the FAO to include Jordan in the

organisation's experimental stage of the food programme, aimed at ensuring food security.

"We are still seeking to achieve food security through extensive and continuous cooperation with the FAO," said Mr. Abu Mishref.

Mr. Hage told reporters that Jordan should ration water and soil in order to increase food production.

This policy, he added, will help increase farmers' revenues and thus augment their exports.

The agricultural sector in Jordan is subject to national disasters such as drought which has negatively affected the country's agricultural production throughout the past several years. Mr. Abu Mishref reported.

He added that Jordan has adopted a comprehensive agricultural policy aimed at increasing food production in a sustainable and efficient manner.

"We are eager to continue implementing this strategy, which was prepared in cooperation with FAO," he added.

According to Mr. Hage, 16 per cent of the near east regional population suffers from malnutrition as compared to Asia and South America where 20 per cent of the population is said to

be malnourished.

"Governments, the private sector and international organisations should work to achieve food security worldwide," he said.

Mr. Hage stressed the need to increase agricultural investments in developing countries from the current annual \$135 billion to an annual \$166 billion.

Mr. Hage is in Jordan on a five-day visit, with the aim of strengthening channels of communication between the organisation's regional office in Cairo, and the Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture.

His visit is also aimed at following up on the World Food Summit, which he said, pledged to ensure and enable the proper political, social, and economic environment for the eradication of poverty and for a durable peace, based on full and equal participation of both women and men.

The summit, which was held in Rome in November last year, Mr. Hage said, pledged to implement policies aimed at improving physical and economic access by all, at all times, to sufficient, nutritionally adequate and safe food and its effective distribution.

He added that the summit was also committed to pur-

suing participatory and sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries and rural development policies and practices.

It promised to ensure that food, agriculture, trade and overall trade policies are conducive to fostering food security for all through a fair and market-oriented world trade system. Mr. Hage said.

The summit also promised to prevent and prepare for natural and other disasters and to meet transient and emergency food requirements in ways which encourage recovery, rehabilitation, development and a capacity to satisfy future needs, he affirmed.

It also committed to promoting optimal allocation and use of public and private investments to foster human resources, sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries and forestry systems and rural development, in high and low areas. Mr. Hage explained.

He concluded by saying that the FAO is currently moving towards finding solutions to hunger, poverty and malnutrition through organising fund-raising campaigns aimed at establishing projects in countries suffering from food shortages.

## Jordan, Egypt to finalise agreement regarding bilateral telecommunications grid in Malta

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordanian and Egyptian technical teams are slated to meet in Malta on April 9 to finalise an agreement linking bilateral telecommunication networks in an international grid laid under the Red Sea.

Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Bassam Saket made the announcement Wednesday following his return to Amman from a visit to Egypt.

During his visit, the minister discussed the project with his Egyptian counterpart Suleiman Mitwally and participated in the Arab League ministerial meeting.

Dr. Saket described Amman as eager to promote telecommunications with Egypt in order to modernise telephone networks as befits the 21st century.

The telecommunications sector

will play a leading role in development at the regional and international levels in the coming century, the minister affirmed.

Jordan will pursue all efforts to build the infrastructure for the telecommunications network through close cooperation with Egypt, he added.

During the Arab League meeting in Cairo, Dr. Saket participated as acting foreign minister and described that the ministerial meeting as focusing on Palestine and the Middle East peace process.

Earlier reports maintained that Arab ministers unanimously resolved to suspend ties with Israel due to the Jewish state's current illegal practices in occupied Palestinian territories as in Jerusalem.

The ministers also discussed the various political situations in Somalia, Sudan and Libya as well as the Iranian occupation of three United Arab Emirates (UAE) islands. Dr. Saket said.

African-Arab cooperation, inter-Arab transport and telecommunications cooperation were all topics of concern to the meeting, he stated.

Referring to Euro-Arab dialogue, Dr. Saket confirmed that Arab and European nations have agreed to hold a conference in Malta by mid-April, following up on the Barcelona meeting of 1995.

He said the ministers expressed support for efforts in maintaining strong economic ties with Europe as well as in the course of promoting peace in the Middle East.

## What's Going On

### FILMS

\* Spanish film "Brigada central" (pts I and II) at Instituto Cervantes, Jabbal Amman at 5:00 p.m. (Tel. 610858).

\* "Degas" (with commentary in Arabic by Adnan Al Sharif) at Darat Al Funun, Jabbal Weibdeh on Thursday at 6:00 p.m.

### AMMAN THEATRE FESTIVAL

\* Performance by Egyptian Tamboura Folklore Dance Troupe and Jordan's Hanounah Troupe respectively at 7:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on Thursday at the Royal Cultural Centre.

\* Performances by Egyptian Tamboura Folklore Dance Troupe and Palestinian Theatre Day Production and Gaza Theatre Laboratory respectively at 7:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on Friday at the Royal Cultural Centre.

### EXHIBITIONS

\* African ceramic arts exhibition at Al Bait Furniture Establishment premises, Mecca Street, until April 10.

\* Artworks by Egyptian artist Jamil Shafiq entitled "Black and White" at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 637598), until April 10.

\* Spring exhibition 1997 at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Uthman, until April 6.

\* Works by Paris-based Syrian artist Ziad Dalloul at Darat Al Funun, Jabbal Weibdeh, until April 3. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

## Weather to cool tomorrow

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prevailing "khamasin" weather conditions, marked by haze, dust and high temperatures, over the past three days will end Thursday evening when cool, humid westerly winds will impact Jordan and the other regions of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Meteorology Department forecast Wednesday.

A department official affirmed that cloudy, rainy weather is expected Friday in different parts of the Kingdom, particularly in the north.

Temperatures are expected to rise to a maximum of 19 degrees Thursday and drop to six at night.

On Friday, the maximum temperatures have been forecast as reaching 16 degrees and dropping to five in the evening.

Meanwhile, the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) announced Wednesday that the winter's rains have nearly replenished the Kingdom's reservoirs which jointly collected nearly 94 million cubic metres (mcm), constituting 88.6 per cent of full capacity.

A JVA source enumerated that the Wadi Shueib Dam in the Jordan Valley is at its full capacity of 1.43 mcm, the King Talal Dam has 70.658 mcm of water out of a total 75 mcm capacity, the Wadi Al Arab Dam has 15.373 mcm of water out of a total capacity of 17.1 mcm, the Sharhabeel Dam contains nearly three mcm of water out of a possible 3.9 mcm and the Kafrein Dam near the Dead Sea has collected 41.9 mcm of water out of a total capacity of 84.52 mcm.

The staff of the Economic Development Issues & Policies Division (EDIPD) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) deeply regret the sudden passing away of their colleague:

**Dr. Ziad Kassem**

on Monday, 31 March 1997


Dr. Ziad Kassem, aged 56, served the United Nations with utmost honesty and efficiency for 28 years.

He was a friend and more than a colleague to all staff members of the Division.

His passing is a great loss for the Division.

The staff of EDIPD offer their sincere condolences to his wife, our colleague Ms. Fatima Kassem, his children and family.

May God bless his soul



**Do to popular demand the campaign has been extended for two more days**

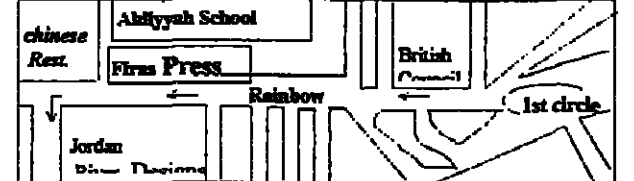
*This is your last chance to put a smile on a child's face this Adha Eid*

**Donate clothes, toys, books, non-perishable food, or anything useful to our campaign for the underprivileged children of Jordan**

You can deposit your contribution to A special Jordan River For Development Projects' bank account number 48/50493/20 - At The Arab Jordan Investment Bank

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- Jordan River Designs' showroom (See map)
- Aramex (Mecca St./Infront of Dahiat Al Hussein)
- Aramex (Irbid)
- McDonald's (Mecca St.)
- Al Ahlia Abela
- Iman Early Learning Center (Abdoun)
- Safeway
- Fakherdin Restaurant



**For further information call 613081 or Fax 613083**

## Embattled Major announces new tax break for couples

LONDON (AFP) — Prime Minister John Major, fighting for his job in elections just 29 days away, Wednesday offered new tax breaks for couples, but was unable to shake off the albatross of Tory sleaze.

Even as he struggled to explain what would amount to an average family tax break of nearly £1000 (\$1500) a year, reporters hounded him about alleged bribe-taking, influence-peddling and sexual misconduct among Tory MPs.

"You are hijacking this interview," an exasperated Major snapped at a BBC Radio journalist questioning him at Downing Street ahead of the official launch of the Conservative Party election manifesto.

"People who are under a cloud of impropriety are innocent until proven otherwise and I will not act precipitously for party political convenience," he said, referring to a "cash-for-questions" probe whose report was squelched when he dis-

solved parliament last month.

The Tory manifesto was presented as a policy package designed to maintain what Major said were "the best economic circumstances in Europe, the best economic circumstances this country has had in years."

"In the tradition of one-nation conservatism, we wish to make 'haves' of the 'have-nots,'" the manifesto said.

"We believe our tax system should recognise and support the crucial role of families in their caring responsibilities."

"It is time for change," said Major. "Time for a change to the next phase of Conservative prosperity that will give everyone — no matter who they are, where they live — more choice and more control over their lives."

The new Tory tax allowance would, for the first time, mean the non-working partner in a family would be able to transfer his or her tax allowance to the

working partner, helping couples where one partner stays home to look after the children or an elderly relative.

The Labour opposition, which is leading the Tories in all polls but this week saw that lead beginning to narrow for the first time in months, immediately branded Major's proposals "dangerous, dishonest and desperate."

In a pre-emptive strike, Labour said Britain's £26 billion (\$41.6 billion) national debt made a mockery of the Conservatives' declared aim of a balanced budget.

It said the proposed new tax break for couples would cost £3.4 billion (\$5.44 billion). Major put it at about half that.

Labour claimed that, added to the Tories' declared aims of cutting the basic income tax rate and abolishing inheritance and capital gains taxes, the total cost would be some £13 billion (\$21 billion). "Where is the money coming from?" said

the Labour spokesman.

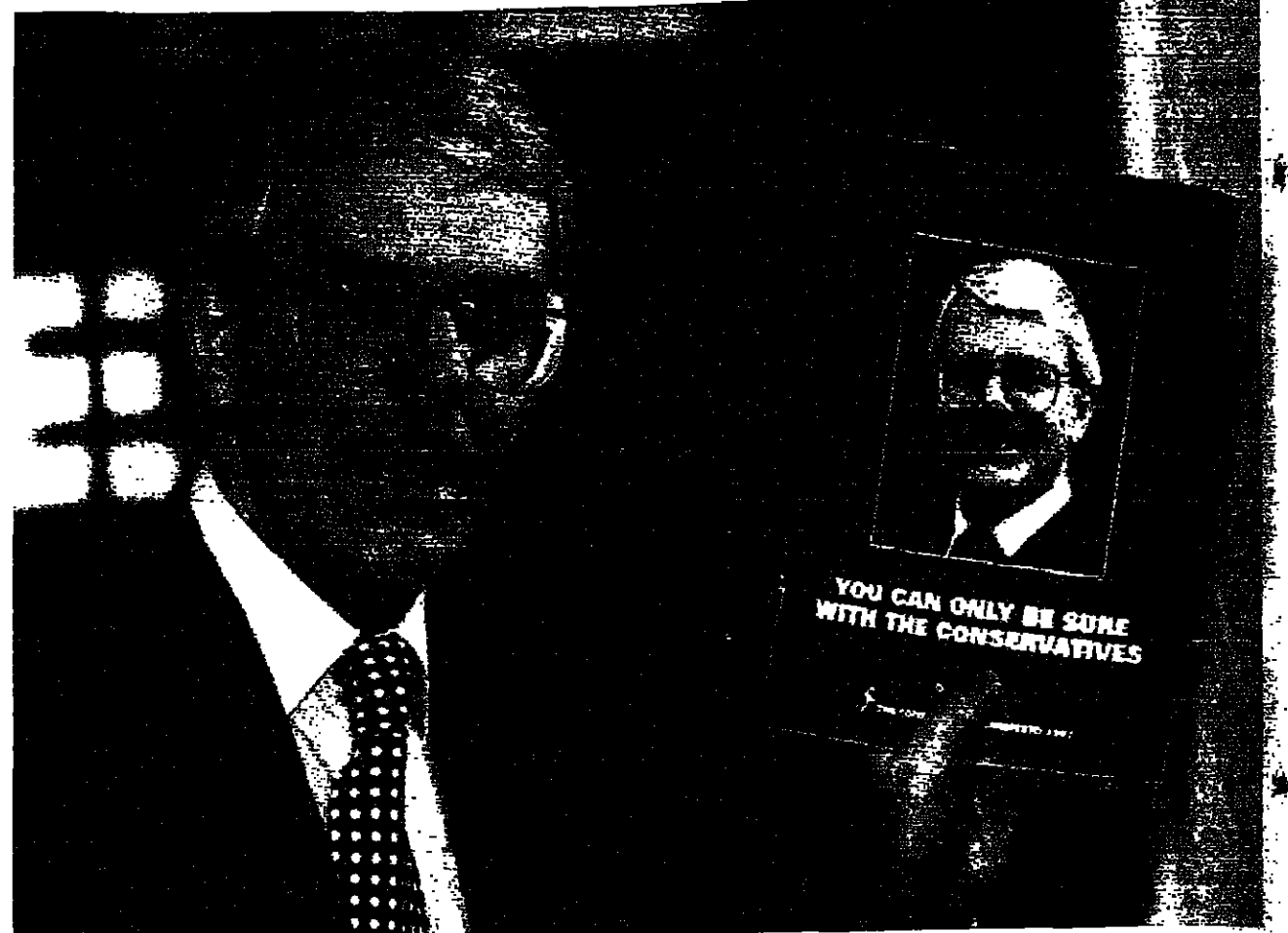
"Nobody will trust new Tory promises about tax when they broke every promise they made at the last election, introducing 22 tax rises when they had promised to cut taxes," said shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown.

Paddy Ashdown, leader of Britain's third political party, the Liberal Democrats, dismissed the Tory manifesto as "promises today, pain tomorrow."

The Tories however insisted their manifesto was fully costed and that the details would be made clear at the official launch later in the day.

"This imaginative proposal further reinforces our commitment to a society built on the security of independence," said Health Secretary Stephen Dorrell.

The embattled Tories got encouragement Wednesday from the latest opinion poll, published in the left-of-centre Guardian, showing Labour's crushing lead had



Prime Minister John Major smiles as he holds the Conservative Party manifesto during a news conference on Wednesday. Major vowed to deliver the next phase of Conservative prosperity which would "turn the 'have-nots' into the haves" (Reuters photo)

narrowed by four points in a month.

Though still 14 points

ahead, the lead was Labour leader Tony Blair's smallest since last November and

weeks was not having the

so-called "sleaze factor" that impact on voters that the dominated the past two

Tories had feared.

## Zairean rebels confirm they will attend peace talks

GOMA, Zaire (AFP) — Zairean rebels confirmed Wednesday they would attend peace talks in South Africa this weekend with officials from President Mobutu Sese Seko's crumbling regime.

But, announcing details of their delegation, they stressed they would be going "to negotiate the departure of Mobutu and his clique," not to take on the mantle of the main political opposition to his regime.

"We're not going to work with Mobutu as the opposition in Kinshasa has done and which has been trodden

on for years," said Gaetan Kakudji, deputy secretary general of the rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire.

He said the rebel delegation would be headed by Bizima Karaha, the rebel's foreign affairs "minister," and that South Africa was sending a plane to pick up the team Thursday.

The talks in South Africa are under the joint aegis of the United Nations and Organisation of African Unity.

Since they launched their offensive nearly six months

ago, the rebels have captured the eastern quarter of this vast nation and have vowed to march into Kinshasa by June to end Mobutu's corrupt 31-year grip on power.

"We hope Kinshasa will also let its delegation leave on Thursday," Kakudji added. Kinshasa has not officially confirmed if it will attend.

"As soon as we reach an accord (with Mobutu's regime), any ceasefire will be automatic," he added.

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Organisation of African Unity.

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"As soon as we reach an accord (with Mobutu's regime), any ceasefire will be automatic," he added.

On Tuesday, rebel leader Laurent-Désiré Kabila met EU special envoy to the Great Lakes region Aldo Ajello in the rebel stronghold of Goma to discuss the fate of Rwandan refugees, a rebel official said.

According to Kakudji, who attended the meeting, Ajello expressed concern about the situation of 100,000 fleeing Rwandan Hutu refugees near Kisangani in eastern Zaire.

Kakudji denied reports that the rebels were blocking transit and supply centres for the refugees, but was firmly opposed to new camps.

On Tuesday, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said the rebels were driving refugees further south in inhuman conditions. The rebels do not want them repatriated via Kisangani.

In Belgian, the Foreign Ministry said Kabila's

rebellion had promised to ensure humanitarian organisations were free to act in the regions it holds.

Spokesman Jan Luyckx said the alliance indicated it favoured the creation of transit and supply centres for the refugees, but was firmly opposed to new camps.

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## Clinton asks FCC to study effects of liquor ads

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton Tuesday asked the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to study curbing television liquor ads following the industry's decision to abandon its nearly half-century-old voluntary ban.

At a White House ceremony and in a letter to FCC Chairman Reed Hundt, Clinton said he wanted the independent federal agency to study what effect such ads would have on underage drinking and then to explore "possible actions" on the matter.

"Liquor has no business with kids, and kids should have no business with liquor. Liquor ads on television would provide a message of encouragement to drink that young people simply don't need. Nothing good can come of it," Clinton said.

Clinton, who had criticised the industry's decision last year to end the voluntary ban in effect for television ads since 1948 and radio ads since 1936, told reporters that he hoped liquor manufacturers would rethink their position.

"My message to the liquor industry is simple," he said. "For 50 years you have kept the ban. It was the responsible thing to do. For the sake of our parents and our young people, please continue to keep that ban."

He added: "Barring that, we will work to find ways to respond to the decision by the distilled spirits industry. We will do what we must do to support our parents, to help them do their jobs."

Clinton's remarks, made in the White House Roosevelt Room, fit squarely with the family-oriented themes of his successful 1996 presidential campaign. They also reflected

his increasing use of the White House as a bully pulpit on social issues in the tradition of former President Theodore Roosevelt.

The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) immediately came out against his stance, citing the constitution's First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech.

"The major broadcasters and virtually all group owners of radio and TV stations have said no to hard liquor ads, despite the spirits industry's decision to end its 50-year voluntary ban on broadcast advertising," it said.

"As strong defenders of the first amendment, we remain staunchly opposed to government efforts to dictate appropriate forms of speech."

The Distilled Spirits Council, an industry group, issued a statement arguing that it was unfair and inaccurate to draw a distinction

between advertising for hard liquor and for beer and wine, whose ads were not covered by the voluntary ban and have run on television for decades.

But Clinton dismissed this as a rationale for liquor advertising, saying the use of alcohol should not be promoted. "At a minimum, there should be no backsliding," he said. "There is something to be said for not making matters worse."

In addition to his remarks, Clinton made his case in a letter to FCC Chairman Hundt which the White House released.

Without specifying precisely what he wanted the FCC to do, Clinton urged the independent federal agency which regulates the broadcast industry to look into what effect the ban's ending may have and then to study "appropriate actions."

"I urge the commission to

take all appropriate actions to explore what effects might ensue in light of the decision by manufacturers of hard liquor to abandon their longstanding voluntary ban on television advertising, specifically the impact on underage drinking," Clinton wrote.

"I would appreciate your help and (that) of the commission in exploring the possible actions you could take to support our parents and children in response to the manufacturers' decision to break with the long and honourable tradition of not advertising on the broadcast medium," he said.

Hundt said in a statement the appropriate FCC response would be "to issue a notice of inquiry that raises all the questions about hard liquor ads on TV so that we can base any recommendations for actions on the record we will develop."

## Cambodia king to step down in 'one or two years'

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Cambodia's ailing King Norodom Sihanouk, apparently despondent about deteriorating conditions in his country, has said he will definitely abdicate the throne by 1999 if he is still alive.

"I will definitely retire within one or two years," the 74-year-old monarch said in an interview with his staff released Wednesday in the latest edition of his monthly bulletin.

The king's comments, from a March 2 interview came before Sunday's deadly grenade attack on an opposition demonstration that killed at least 16 and wounded at least another 119 in front of Cambodia's parliament building.

His comments instead appear to refer in part to a growing tide of republicanism in Cambodia most recently seen by the signing of a cooperation agreement between the former communist Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and the smaller Free Republican Party.

The CPP, led by powerful Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, is the main partner of the Royalist FUNCINPEC Party in the current coalition government.

King Sihanouk, who is now in Beijing for medical treatment said he was not shocked by the CPP's agreement with the Free Republican Party because in "our second kingdom of Cambodia, the most unexpected or strange things are normal."

He cautioned, however, that pushing for a move toward a republican form of government might not be the best thing for the country noting that previous attempts had not gone well.

He cited the ill-fated us-backed government that toppled him in a 1970 coup, the Khmer Rouge government,

## Switzerland urges new talks on Marcos money

MANILA (R) — A high-ranking Swiss official Wednesday urged fresh negotiations among rival claimants to the estimated \$500 million kept by late Philippine ruler Ferdinand Marcos in Swiss banks to determine who the money should go to.

Federal Councillor Jean-Pascal Delamuraz said Switzerland was not interested in the money and was eager to hand it over to the rightful claimants.

"The handover (of the money) must take place and we would be very happy to see Hong Kong Two, that is, a new negotiation to find a solution between conflicting interests," Delamuraz told a news conference.

Delamuraz, speaking through an interpreter, said it was in everyone's interest to settle the issue of who had rightful claim to the money "because the more we wait, the more we see new claimants and new partners to enter the scene."

Hong Kong hosted talks in January 1996 among repre-

sentatives of various claimants but the negotiations ended in failure.

The money is claimed by the Philippine government, the Marcos family and victims of human rights abuses during the Marcos era. The latest claimant to the money was a U.S.-based company representing a late Filipino locksmith, who had accused Marcos of stealing a Buddha statue supposedly made of gold that the locksmith said he found in a treasure hunt.

Manila alleges the Swiss deposits are part of some \$5 billion allegedly looted from the country by Marcos and his associates during his 20-year rule. Marcos was ousted in a 1986 popular revolt and died in exile in Hawaii three years later.

Delamuraz, who is visiting Manila as head of a Swiss economic mission, said he discussed the issue in talks with President Fidel Ramos.

They agreed "a solution must be found as quickly as possible" in accordance with Philippine and Swiss laws.

## Thousands rally in Japan against U.S. military use of Okinawa

TOKYO (AFP) — Nearly 3,000 people rallied in Tokyo Wednesday in protest at a government move to allow U.S. forces to continue using land in Okinawa although its owners refuse to renew leasing contracts.

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto meanwhile led a delegation of political party leaders to a memorial service in Okinawa for Chobyo Yara, the first governor of the island province after it reverted to Japanese rule in 1972.

"The whole nation should share Okinawa's pain and realise its rebirth," Hashimoto told the memorial service, in memory of Yara, who, with his reformist ideals, served as governor until 1976 and died last month aged 95.

The premier flew back to Tokyo later and met political leaders, including Ichiro Ozawa, who heads the main opposition New Frontier Party, to seek their help in his plan to revise Japan's law for expropriating land

for U.S. forces.

Hashimoto's cabinet was due to present a bill tomorrow for the legal changes which would allow the use of land by U.S. forces regardless of approval by its owners.

The move has been strongly opposed by Okinawans and the Social Democratic Party which holds a swing vote in parliament and usually supports the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

They have instead called for a reduction of U.S. troops in Okinawa, a demand flatly rejected by the United States in view of the fluid situation on the Korean peninsula.

Around 27,000 of the 47,000 U.S. troops in Japan are in Okinawa, which accounts for only 0.6 per cent of Japan's land area, but accommodates three-quarters of the U.S. military facilities in the country.

At Hibiya Park, in the centre of Tokyo, the demonstrators called for an end to the massive U.S. military

presence on Okinawa, a strategic sub-tropical island chain in the east China Sea.

"U.S. bases in Okinawa were built on land forcibly seized at the point of bayonet under the U.S. military occupation after the war," a handbill read.

The law revision would allow the U.S. military to continue running 12 facilities on Okinawan land currently owned by some 3,000 people.

Landowners say they will refuse to extend leases when they expire on May 14, in protest at the intense military presence in Okinawa.

The anti-military sentiment has heightened after the rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl by three U.S. servicemen in September 1995. The demonstrators, estimated a some 3,000 by police and representing anti-war, human rights and various other citizens groups, peacefully marched through the government quarter of Kasumigaseki after the rally.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Taliban continue beard-trimmer witchhunt

KABUL (AFP) — Six Afghan men have been physically punished by the strict Taliban militia for trimming their beards, official media reported Wednesday. Officials of the Islamic Command and Prohibition Department met out the punishment to the six men in Kabul, the Taliban's Radio Shariat said. The announcement did not specify whether the culprits were state employees or ordinary civilians, nor the method of punishment used. However sources said those punished were likely to have received a beating from militiamen. For more than a week the Taliban militia have conducted a purge of beard trimming state employees. So far, about 86 sackings have been announced.

### Vietnam, China to meet on maritime row

HANOI (R) — Vietnam said Wednesday that China had proposed holding expert-level talks next week on competing claims to a potentially gas-rich area between Hainan island and Vietnam's Central Coast. "We have asked for discussions between experts as soon as possible," Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam told reporters after the opening of the national assembly's spring session. "China has proposed next week." He said the venue for negotiations still had to be discussed, but Vietnamese officials were ready to visit Beijing if the suggestion of meeting in Hanoi was not accepted. Chinese officials said Tuesday that Beijing was preparing for talks on the dispute.

### Bavarian police arrest 8 over arms finds

MUNICH, Germany (AFP) — Police in Bavaria said Wednesday they had uncovered a series of weapons caches and arrested eight men in connection with the finds, which was made in a forest region. Seized were some 30 machineguns and semi-automatic weapons, 50 pistols and revolvers, 12 rifles, 13 grenades, two kilograms of gunpowder and half a tonne of ammunition. The arms believed to be from ex-Yugoslavia were found in various dwelling places, garages and underground in raids on 18 addresses by regional and border police forces, the regional police headquarters said. Six of the eight men were remanded in custody charged with illegal possession of the weapons.

### Hepatitis cocktail served to 9,000 students

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Strawberries potentially contaminated with hepatitis A were served to 9,000 students and adults in school lunches, officials disclosed Tuesday. The strawberries were served last week in fruit cocktail as part of school lunches in 18 Los Angeles Unified School District schools, said Deputy Superintendent Ruben Zacarias. "It's important to emphasize that these students and adults may — and I emphasise 'may' — have been exposed to the hepatitis virus," he said. "Unfortunately, it is practically impossible to test for the presence of this virus in food. So, there's no way to know, for sure, whether these food items were, in fact, contaminated."

### Italian judge shows caution on uranium find

ROME (R) — A magistrate investigating the cause of a mysterious Italian air crash in 1980 voiced caution Wednesday over reports that the commercial airliner may have been carrying a secret consignment of uranium. Judge Rosario Priore told Italian radio that scientific analysis of wreckage of the plane, which crashed killing 81 people near the island of Ustica, was still at an early stage. "We have to be very cautious," Mr. Priore told Italian radio. "The study is still in progress and...there is still a lot of work to be done." Italian media reports have long speculated that the plane, which crashed into the sea on a flight from the central city of Bologna to the Sicilian capital Palermo on June 27, 1980, may have been carrying uranium to be sent on to Libya by sea.

### Vatican denies Coca Cola sponsorship

VATICAN CITY (AFP) — The Vatican formally denied Wednesday that Coca Cola may be one of the sponsors for the holy year in 2000, as the Rome newspaper Il Messaggero had earlier reported. The organising committee of the grand jubilee for the year 2000 said that the paper's suggestion that "contacts or even accords" had been established between itself and a multinational of the soft-drink sector were "totally false". A statement issued by the Vatican press office also denied that a possible sponsorship by the U.S. Fizzy drinks giant had been brought up during a meeting of the organising committee.





**CRASH:** Part of an engine of a U.S. C-130 lies on the ground Tuesday as rescue personnel work to extinguish fires and search for survivors after the cargo plane burst into flames on landing in Honduras on April 1, killing three Americans and injuring seven, two of them critically, U.S. officials said. The plane, on a flight from Panama City, veered off the runway as it landed at Tegucigalpa airport (Reuters photo)

## Red Cross warns of imminent catastrophe in North Korea

SEOUL (R) — Red Cross officials Wednesday warned of imminent famine in North Korea, saying kitchens were bare except for grass and tree bark, children were weak and cattle were being slaughtered to save feed grain.

Yasuo Tanaka, an officer of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies who visited the impoverished nation last week, confirmed reports that food stocks had almost completely dried up.

"In some kitchens, there was no rice, no food at all. I asked them what they ate and they showed me natural grasses," he told a news conference.

In other kitchens he saw tree bark, roots and dried vegetables.

"Children looked weak and tired," he said.

"A boy I met who said he was 10 years old looked like a seven-year-old. A girl who said she was five years old looked like she was three years old. She was very thin."

"Without urgent international aid programmes, a large number of North Koreans will face starvation," said Johan Schaer, chief of the Asia-Pacific region of the Geneva-based Red Cross.

"Food stocks in North Korea can run out any time now," Mr. Schaer said.

Mr. Schaer said some 600,000 livestock recently had been slaughtered to divert feed grain for human consumption.

The Red Cross assessment of looming catastrophe matches a report Tuesday by the U.N. World Food Programme, which said it planned to double its \$41 million aid appeal for North Korea citing fears of starvation "on a massive scale."

Adding to a sense of crisis, Seoul's Defence Ministry said North Korea had just completed a military training exercise on a broader scale than usual.

North Korean citizens conducted air-raid and evacuation drills while camouflaged troops trained in tunnel warfare, the ministry said in a statement.

"Such exercises were held in 1995 and 1996 in limited areas. This year they were conducted nationwide, which is unusual. Our military has thus strengthened its surveillance," it said.

Mr. Tanaka said North Korean officials put the 1996 harvest at 2.5 million tonnes, leaving a shortfall of 2.32 million tonnes. Grain stocks at the end of December totalled 240,000 tonnes.

Mr. Schaer and Mr. Tanaka are in South Korea to supervise an aid shipment of food and vegetable seed worth more than \$1 million that is due to leave Thursday or Friday.

It would be the largest food delivery by South Korea religious and civic groups, since such shipments began in 1995.

Mr. Schaer welcomed Seoul's decision Monday to lift a ban on private organisations providing rice to Pyongyang. Previously, private groups could only ship non-rice food aid because of fears that rice could be diverted to the military.

## Ugandan troops repulse rebel bid to cross border

KAMPALA (AFP) — Ugandan army troops have repulsed an attempt by rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to cross over to Uganda from their bases in Sudan, according to radio reports here Wednesday.

Independent Capital Radio said the Christian fundamentalist rebels had tried to cross over at Parabek in Uganda's northern Kitgum district, late Tuesday.

It gave no details of any casualties.

The rebels have been fighting in northern Uganda for the past 10 years in a bid to replace the government of President Yoweri Museveni with one based on the Bible's 10 Commandments, but have been losing their Sudanese bases recently as rebels in

## Indian political parties' positions in parliament

NEW DELHI (R) — Following are political parties' current positions in India's lower house of parliament, the Lok Sabha, which is scheduled to hold a vote of confidence in Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda on April 11.	
Deve Gowda, whose coalition controls 180 votes, would need a simple majority of lawmakers present and voting to win the trust vote.	
The 545-seat Lok Sabha currently has 542 members. Two seats are vacant and one is occupied by the speaker, P.A. Sangma, who can vote in the event of a tie.	
The national conference, a regional party from the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir, has no Lok Sabha members but is represented in the upper house, the Rajya Sabha, and is part of Deve Gowda's 15-party United Front Coalition.	
PARTY	STRENGTH
<b>Bharatiya Janata Party and allies</b>	<b>193</b>
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	162
Shiv Sena	15
Shiromani Akali Dal	8
Samata Party	5
Haryana Vikas Party	3
<b>Congress and allies</b>	<b>140</b>
Indian National Congress	138
All India Indira Congress (Tiwari)	2
<b>United front coalition</b>	<b>180</b>
Janata Dal (Maanila Congress) (TMC)	20
Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	17
Samajwadi Party	17
Telugu Desam Party	17
Communist Party of India	12
Revolutionary Socialist Party	5
Asom Gana Parishad	5
All India Indira Congress	2
All India Forward Block	3
Samajwadi Janata Party (Rashtriya)	1
Maharashtra Gomantak Party	1
United Goa Democratic Party	1
National Conference Party	0
<b>Rest</b>	<b>31</b>
Bahujan Samaj Party	11
Muslim League	2
All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen	1
Autonomous State Demand Committee	1
Jharkhand Mukti Morcha	1
Kerala Congress (M)	1
Sikkim Democratic Front	1
Bharatiya Kisan Kamgar Party	1
Independents	8
Nominatees	2
Vacancies	2
<b>Total (excluding speaker)</b>	<b>544</b>

## Albania smooths rift with Italy over sinking, way open for force

TIRANA (AFP) — Albania and Italy have apparently put aside their diplomatic rift over last week's drowning deaths of Albanian refugees, their prime ministers meeting Wednesday to discuss deployment of a multinational force for strife-torn Albania.

The row over the incident Friday — a collision between an Albanian tugboat and an Italian navy vessel that resulted in the loss of up to 87 lives — had threatened to delay the arrival of the 5,000-strong, Italian-led force.

Italy's Prime Minister Romano Prodi travelled Wednesday to a rebel-held town in southern Albania for a short meeting with his Albanian counterpart Bashkim Fino, journalists in the town said.

The two, meeting in Gjirokastra's city hall, discussed the arrival of the U.N.-approved mission as well as Friday's incident in the Oranto Strait off Brindisi. Confusion still surrounds the circumstances of the disaster, for which the two countries initially blamed each other.

Prodi told Italian television after the meeting that he had expressed condolences for the incident on behalf of the Italian people, and Fino confirmed that his government had reiterated a request for a multinational force to come to Albania's aid.

"The Italian government wanted a repeat of the Albanian request after a certain crisis between the two countries. We gave them it," he said.

Fino indicated that the sinking incident was no longer an obstacle, "what happened is no more than a tragic incident. There is no crisis. Albania is ready (for the force), the other countries are ready, we must not waste any more time. Each day lost damages Albania," he said.

The apparent progress came after U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan called on Italy to make a gesture of "psychological reparation" towards Albania over the sinking to speed the deployment of the force.

"The sooner the mission leaves, the better it will be," Mr. Annan told reporters in New York late Tuesday.

Military officials from countries due to take part in a security force for protecting aid shipments to Albania were to meet in Rome later Wednesday to hammer out details.

The sinking stirred up anti-Italian sentiment in Albania just as Italy was preparing to lead the security force.

Feelings in Vlore, one of two ports the multinational force will secure, are reportedly running high. Many of the victims came from the port, and some locals have openly threatened to use their looted assault rifles against any Italians who land there.

The self-appointed "Committee of Public Salvation" which claims to exercise authority in Vlore has denied any ill feeling toward Italian soldiers.

In a statement published in Tirana, newspapers Wednesday, the committee said that media reports of threats to a possible Italian contingent following the sinking were "distortions of reality."

However, sources in Vlore have said the committee exercises no real control over the local population.

Fino said he had invited Prodi to visit Vlore, an offer which he said was "accepted with pleasure."

After their meeting, Fino went on to Athens for talks with Greek and other European officials on how to end the uprising in Albania.

"A new chapter in relations between Albania and Greece is going to open," Fino said before leaving.

Fino, due to stay in the Greek capital for two days, is to meet with his Greek counterpart Costas Simitis. European security envoy Franz Vranitzky and Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos, and his counterpart Hans Van Mierlo of the Netherlands which currently chairs the European Union.

"The order of the day is open," said Dimitris Reppas, spokesman for the Greek government. "These talks are within the general framework of current discussions on the crisis in Albania," he added.

Meanwhile, Italy's Defence Minister Beniamino Andreatta met his Albanian opposite member Shaki Vucaj and other senior Italian military officials in Brindisi Wednesday.

They visited a former barracks where a dozen Albanian refugees who survived the sinking are being housed.

Vucaj, visibly moved, expressed his government's solidarity with the survivors. "We are together with you, you must be strong," he told them.

Italian and Albanian boats in Brindisi flew their flags at half mast in memory of the dead.

## Russia, Belarus sign controversial union accord

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his Belarusian counterpart Alexander Lukashenko signed Wednesday a scaled-back "union" treaty, seen as historic by some but condemned as economic and nationalistic folly by others.

The accord created a new Russian-Belarusian entity, while preserving both countries' sovereignty, with the intention of cooperation in economic and defense matters.

"We have no illusions that the union of our two states will resolve all our problems, but it forms a base to go forward in a more dynamic way," Yeltsin said at the Kremlin signing ceremony.

"We will not transform our community into a unified state for now, but a union of two states," he said.

The accord was only an abridged version of a more detailed integration treaty which Yeltsin agreed at the last minute to delay.

He had come under severe pressure from liberals who feared he was putting Moscow's economic reforms at risk by promising close links with the moribund Belarusian economy.

The fuller union treaty was initially by Yeltsin and Lukashenko. They also signed a memorandum on how to finalise its text which, according to the Kremlin, will then go to both countries' parliaments for ratification.

Yeltsin said the full treaty should be ready by May 15.

It was not immediately clear how far integration would go in practice.

Exactly a year ago, Russia, with a population of 148 million, and Belarus, with a population of 10 million, signed a "community" accord which contained many of the same principles, but has barely been implemented.

The union is seen as a strategic counter-move to NATO's imminent expansion into the former Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe and is particularly popular among Russian Nationalists and Communists.

For Yeltsin, reuniting the two Slavic neighbours is also a chance to be remembered not only as the man who broke up the Soviet Union in 1991, but the president who created a new form of union, analysts say.

For Lukashenko, the accord reinforces his stature at home and his alliance with Moscow, which has turned a blind eye to his authoritarian rule. The union "was the most sober step Yeltsin has taken in the last five years," Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov told Echo Moscow radio.

He predicted that other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the loose grouping of 12 ex-Soviet republics, would want to enter into the same kind of union. "They will see that we live better and will join us."

The union was also welcomed by Mikhail Gorbachev, the last president of the Soviet Union. Echo Moscow radio reported.

However, there are plenty of opponents, both in Minsk, where there are fears of Belarus being swallowed by Russia, and Moscow, where reformist politicians are wary of the economic consequences.

Yeltsin responded to the economic fears, openly expressed by his reformist Deputy Premier Boris Nemtsov, by saying "we do not intend to rush ahead in the financial and budgetary areas."

"The road to a united currency between two countries is fairly long. There should be no illusions," he was quoted as saying by Interfax.

Lukashenko also stressed "it will never be true that our small country will be a heavy burden to Russia."

Russian Central Bank Chairman Sergei Dubinin told ITAR-TASS that it will take "one or two years, not several months," to bring Belarus into the Russian ruble zone.

Meanwhile, presidential hopeful and former National Security Chief Alexander Lebed said he was not against integration but "the construction of a house should begin with laying a foundation — in this case construction has started with the roof."

Lebed, quoted by Interfax, added that "such houses don't last long."

## Land row kills 19 in Nigerian oil-producing state of Delta

LAGOS (R) — Nineteen people were killed last week in tribal clashes over land in the midwestern Nigerian state of Delta, where oil workers were held hostage in another tribal dispute, a semi-official newspaper said on Wednesday.

The Daily Times said the clashes pitched Ijaws against Urhobos with each of the tribes claiming the land where oil giant Shell Rd-Asshell is operating belonged to it.

It was the first press report on the clashes which were not directly related to riots in the same region last week when Ijaw and Isekiri tribesmen fought over relocation of the headquarters of the Warri local council headquarters which groups the three tribes. Three people died in the riots.

The Daily Times said a community leader told reporters in Warri on Tuesday that 19 people were killed in the Ijaw-Urhobo clashes and casualties included women and children ambushed on their way to farms by armed gangs in the area.

Eighteen people lost their lives in similar clashes last year in a dispute which dates back to 1971, it said.

Shell's operations in the area were shut down last week when the feud over the council headquarters led to the seizure of its oil installations by villagers who also took 127 of the company's Nigerian workers hostages.

They were freed in batches after delicate negotiations and the company has gradually resumed oil production in the area.

## New England Blizzard blamed for five deaths

BOSTON (R) — An early spring blizzard buried New England and the Northeast under nearly 90 centimetres of heavy, wet snow on Wednesday, downing power lines, closing airports and schools and killing five people.

Massachusetts Gov. William Weld declared a state of emergency through Wednesday and called out the National Guard to help clear roads and open shelters. More than 168,000 households were without power in the state.

From Philadelphia to New Hampshire, from New York's Hudson Valley to the tip of Cape Cod, the wet snow combined with near hurricane winds to bring all forms of transportation to a halt.

Boston's Logan International Airport reopened shortly after 10 p.m. EST (0300 GMT) on an emergency basis, 22 hours after it was closed by drifting snow, near hurricane force winds and zero visibility.

"The airport expects to be fully operational by morning," Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency spokesman Jim Horgan said. "Until then, they've got one runway open for emergencies."

Logan became more of a hotel than an airport as hundreds of people huddled in terminals waiting for flights that never left. Officials added it could take up to three days for all the passengers to get flights out.

Thousands of stranded travellers spent Monday night in temporary shelters in northeastern Pennsylvania and Chester county in suburban Philadelphia as snowfall totals ranged from 13 centimetres to as much as 61 centimetres.

Abandoned vehicles cluttered roadways and a number of interstates remained closed in parts of Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Commuter rail lines in Boston and New York said they were operating, but with up to four hour delays. Amtrak reported that one of its trains collided with a downed tree on the route between Albany and New York City.

In Boston, where between 46 centimetres and 61 centimetres of snow fell, city bus service was halted for the first time in 20 years and the city's subways were only partially operating.

Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, who ordered city hall closed, said at least two people had died while trying to shovel out.

The vicious blizzard spawned thunderstorms and lightning. Winds topped 105 kph and seas off the New England coast had 6-9 metre waves.

The storm, which included winds topping 105 kilometres per hour off the New England coast, was also blamed for the deaths of two fishermen whose vessel capsized in Maine.

And in New York State police blamed the weather for the death of a 36-year-old caskiller man in a traffic accident.

"It's been wild," said Chuck Hill, who lives in Ipswich, a north Massachusetts shore town. "There are more limbs down from this storm than we've had altogether in 23 years that I've lived here."



## Jordan Times

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## The Washington steps

MOST OBSERVERS agree that there were two major results to His Majesty King Hussein's talks with President Bill Clinton Tuesday. One was the president's acknowledgement of Jordan's indispensable role in advancing the peace process coupled with the acknowledgement that not enough was done to help and support the country economically and otherwise after it signed the peace treaty with Israel and made every effort to widen and deepen peace among Arabs and Israelis. A closer look at the total aid, both economic and military, that Amman has received from Washington since the signing of the Washington Declaration and later the Wadi Araba treaty would reveal that it has increased from \$307 million in 1994 to \$468 million in 1995 but started dropping to \$253 million in 1996, and for 1997 it will be a mere \$107 million. No wonder President Clinton raised this issue during the King's talks at the White House hopefully in a bid to reconsider ways and means to show more appreciation for what this country has done for peace and the challenges that it faces still on the road to achieving it comprehensively and durably. The second important result of the talks was the president's decision to become personally involved in the peace process. "I am prepared to be personally involved," he said at the meeting. The personal intervention of President Clinton is no small feat considering the critical stage that the peace effort is passing through and the crucial intervention of the Americans in breaking the current deadlock. The fact that the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, was "summoned" to Washington for talks at the White House shows the extent of the president's seriousness this time around.

There can be no doubt that the projected meeting between the American and Israeli leaders will be important not only to resuming negotiations on the Oslo accords but also to attempts inside Israel over forming a national unity government. There is a greater likelihood that Netanyahu is now poised to jettison the extremists in his present government in order to put peace talks with the Palestinians back on track. The "dumping" of the five right-wing and ultra-religious party representatives from the cabinet has become a sine qua non for any serious resumption of negotiations with the Palestinians, the Syrians and the Lebanese. It must have dawned on the Israeli prime minister at last that the final status talks require the widest possible platform in Israel. With the Palestinian side edging closer to accepting the Israeli offer to accelerate the pace of their peace negotiations in a bid to conclude the final status talks within six months, the stage is indeed set for the formation of a "national unity" government composed of only moderates in the ruling Likud Party with the Labour and perhaps other parties.

If this is indeed the future scenario, then all the suffering of the past few weeks might not be in vain. Netanyahu tried the counsel of the hard-liners in his camp and got nowhere. It is time now to accept the counsel of the moderates on both sides of the fence.

The just-concluded talks between the King and the U.S. president coupled with the upcoming Clinton-Netanyahu talks could certainly put the final touches on a new formula that stands to save the entire peace process from imminent collapse.

Which could be exactly the kind of clear strategy and creative thinking that Clinton talked about just before his talks started with the King. While the results of new positive developments have to be awaited, we have no doubt that the King's talks with the U.S. president will have been as a crucial attempt as anyone could imagine towards getting us there.

## ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily demanded that the number of deputies in the coming Parliament should be increased because the Jordanian population is on the increase and so that the people's representation will be fair and acceptable. Mahmoud Rimawi said it is illogical to see Parliament members fixed at 80 while the population continues to grow, adding that lesser numbers of deputies mean lesser representation. Jordan has over the past five years witnessed rapid political, economic and social development, with the majority showing increased interest in seeing more of their eligible representatives involved in shaping up the country's future, given the current circumstances in the Arab region and the world, continued the writer. It is feared, said the writer, that with the government insisting on retaining the number of deputies, the public will be less interested in voting in the coming elections, something that runs contrary to the national interests. Furthermore, since there is a clear tendency to separate the legislative from the executive authority, the need grows for a stronger and more pluralistic Parliament to watch over the government's performance and steer the country in a more sound and effective manner towards economic progress, said the writer. He said more people's representatives in Parliament means stronger democracy.

## The View from Academia

Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdonbeh

## The many things we fear

WE, IN this part of the world, fear many things. We fear to cross the road, even at a pedestrian crossing, lest a maniacal motorist should run us over; and we fear to drive lest a reckless pedestrian should throw himself in front of us at any moment. We fear to ask a cab or bus driver to lower the music a bit or put out his annoying cigarette lest he should stop his vehicle and order us out of it.

We fear to provoke the wrath of a civil servant who is being rude to us lest he should delay, or even refuse, to take action regarding our application. Students fear to argue with their teachers lest they should think they are being "smart" or sulky; we fear to argue with our superiors (parents, older brothers and sisters, husbands, bosses) lest they should think we are rebellious or subversive.

We fear to ask a neighbour to prevent his children from playing soccer at our doorsteps lest we should get into a verbal or even physical fight with him (or worse with his children).

We fear to drink tap water or eat lettuce or cucumbers lest we should develop cancer. We fear to grow trees on the sidewalks in our suburbs lest either children should pull them out, pluck their leaves and use their branches as "swords" to play with or the goats from a passing herd eat them up. We fear to install public phones lest our citizens should abuse or destroy them.

We fear to travel to fraternal countries lest their border police should exploit it, the bellboys should take advantage of us, the tour guides should fool us, the cab drivers should drain our pockets.

We fear to take our cars to repair shops lest our experts should fix one thing and damage two different others.

We fear to go out lest we should not know where to go. We fear to dine out lest we should have to deal with obnoxious waiters or waitresses who are too nice. We fear to pet a dog lest

we should get bitten.

We fear winter lest we should wade in mud, lest our streets should flood, lest our cars should fail to start in the morning, lest we should freeze. We fear summer lest the water should be cut off, lest we should wade in sewage, lest we should suffocate from car smoke and fumes, lest we should run into wedding processions. We fear spring lest we should go out on picnics and not find space.

We fear to apply for a phone line lest we should have to wait for years for the application to be processed.

We fear to listen lest we should be abused; we fear to speak lest we should be misunderstood. We fear to be polite lest we should be taken for granted. We fear to be aggressive lest we should be repulsed. We fear to stay in the shadow lest we should be forgotten. We fear to get involved lest we should make mistakes. We fear to be, and we fear not to be.

We fear to have fun lest we should regret it later. We fear to be serious lest we should become bores. We fear to be children lest we should be underestimated or derided, and we fear to be adults lest we should shoulder burdens.

We fear others and we fear ourselves. We fear the opinion of others; we fear criticism. We fear reliance on others and we fear reliance on ourselves. We fear loneliness and we fear the crowd. We fear mediocrity and we fear excellence. We fear failure and we fear success. We fear to be liberal and we fear to be conservative. We fear to be deferent and we fear to be bold. We fear to lie and we fear to tell the truth.

We fear the present; we fear the past; we fear the future. We fear monotony and we fear change. We fear spontaneity and we fear plans. We fear our feelings and we fear our thoughts. We fear love and we fear hatred.

We fear simple things and we fear difficult things.

There are so many things which we fear.

## King Hussein's magnanimity is an outstanding model for leaders in the region

By Judith Kipper

THE MIDDLE East, again passionate and petulant, is rarely characterised by magnanimity. Revenge and violence among these ancient tribes works its way into negotiations in peace as well as in war. Tradition and ritual haunt the historic memories of the peoples of this troubled region and sometimes destroy their dreams, leaving only resentment, fear and deep mistrust.

King Hussein of the rare exception. He is a true leader, a statesman and a tribal leader who is noble of heart and mind. He is beloved by his people as much today as at any time during his 44-year reign. His historic role deserves recognition and active support by the United States, Israel, the Palestinians and those Arab states that are committed to peace and moderation. He is a real friend of the peace makers.

As the King's recent trip to Israel demonstrated, he was personally deeply shaken by the deaths of the seven Israeli girls at the hands of a Jordanian soldier. His sensitivity to human suffering and his tenderness for children made this a particularly painful event for him. His Majesty acted decisively and quickly to condemn the senseless act of violence and send a clear message that he would not waver in his commitment to peace and moderation. Jordan's intention of a warm peace with Israel, His Majesty affirmed, will withstand whatever pressures are brought to bear. The King's pride in his security forces and his unusual admission of shame brought about by the act of a single individual is

genuine in this leader who has worked so hard to build Jordan's institutions.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his advisers were quick to respond to King Hussein's condolence visit to Israel, yet they do not seem to fully comprehend the magnitude of the symbolism and the substance of His Majesty's personal engagement in setting a courageous and timely example of normalisation and acceptance despite real doubts in some circles in Jordan. Ironically, despite disagreements and a lack of trust between Israel's prime minister and the Palestinians' Yasser Arafat, until now relations between Israel and the Palestinians, particularly among security forces, have developed unusually well. Yet Israeli cabinet members and others feel free to threaten the very Palestinian leadership with which they must negotiate their common future and coexist.

Escalating violence over several days between Israel and the Palestinians erodes whatever confidence is left in the peace process. Israel's decision to go ahead with a housing development in Har Homa in East Jerusalem is provocative, poorly timed and could have been delayed. Nevertheless, the Palestinian suicide bomber in Tel Aviv perpetrated an intolerable criminal act against innocent victims. These developments and the frustration of the young stone throwers in Palestinian cities and towns obscure the crucial issues in implementing the Oslo II accord in all its details and negotiating the difficult final status issues.

Unfortunately, the magnanimous nature of King Hussein and Jordan's diplomacy find few counterparts in the Middle East. This Israeli government seems to be unaware of consequences of its own rhetoric and actions. The Palestinians have come a long way, but reacting with blood and guts is criminal and will not lead to a Palestinian state.

The ideological government of Prime Minister Netanyahu suffers from many problems, yet its biggest challenge is to decide what it really wants for Israel. Fortunately, there are not now major threats to Israel's national security despite the Israelis' constant fear for their personal security. But the peace King Hussein envisages and which Israel has always dreamed of with its Arab neighbours will not be built in Har Homa.

A descendant of the Prophet Mohammad and chief of the Hashemites, King Hussein believes in a divine mission, yet he is also a Western-educated monarch who transcends both cultures. He is a quiet and sensitive man, rather shy and surprisingly informal. In the last decade, he courageously gave up any claim to the West Bank, signed a peace treaty with Israel and most importantly, like his friend King Juan Carlos of Spain, he gave up some power to allow Jordan to begin to democratise, which has included freedom of expression, political parties, economic reform and even weekly tabloids whose criticism is sometimes ruthless.

He is a survivor of many Middle Eastern dramas including assassination attempts, internal and external threats to the Kingdom as well as some errors of judgement or emphasis that ultimately worked against the vital interests of Jordan, such as support for Iraq in the Gulf crisis. All have, to King Hussein's credit, been handled diplomatically through negotiations or mediation without resorting to violence or threats. His approach — unique in the region — is dedicated to reconciliation, be it with the Israelis, the Palestinians or Arabs as well as with the opposition in Jordan itself.

King Hussein touched the hearts and minds of the Israelis. He came in grief and sorrow making a powerful gesture that promotes the forces of peace in the region. Prime Minister Netanyahu, who was publicly supported by King Hussein after his election last June, could learn from His Majesty's long experience and leadership. Confrontation and rhetoric may play well at home politically, but they do not serve the cause of peace for Israel or its partners. Historic opportunities must not be lost to local minority politics, because the fate of the Jewish state depends on living permanently in peace in an Arab neighbourhood.

The magnanimity of King Hussein — reconciliation without revenge — is an outstanding model for Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat.

The writer is a Middle East specialist associated with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies and the Council on Foreign Relations. The article above is reprinted from The Washington Post.

He is a survivor of many Middle Eastern dramas including assassination attempts, internal and external

## The balance between war and peace — difficult to maintain with whimsical extremes

By J.S. Al Momani

THE PEACE process started losing momentum when Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated. The slow process of peace became even slower with the Hamas bombings in the heart of Israel, last year, followed by Israel's "Grapes of Wrath" operation and the consequent Cana massacre in Lebanon. Then came Netanyahu, Israel's first prime minister to be directly elected by Israelis. A government was formed in cooperation with Israel's ultra rightwing religious parties, to whose whims, Netanyahu, the peace process and the whole region became hostages.

The death of the peace process has been greatly exaggerated, for it will not be allowed to die; too much

is at stake for everybody, and each player wants the peace process to serve a particular interest.

The conventional wisdom of two camps (one for peace, one against) is a fallacy. In fact, there are three factions, or camps, that are desperately pushing and shoving in an attempt to influence the march of peace, each to serve a different end.

The first faction is the one that is led by His Majesty King Hussein and the late Yitzhak Rabin, supported by peacekeepers on both sides. This group endeavours to achieve peace among people as well as within people. The negotiations conducted between King Hussein and the late Rabin was not that between two enemies. The negotiations were between

two leaders who want to save their people bloodshed and suffering, and replace animosity and coldness with friendship and warmth. They struggled to understand each other and, on many occasions, put themselves in each other's place to better understand their respective situations.

The result was a model peace treaty that was signed in Wadi Araba in October 1994. King Hussein's condolence visit to Israel in the wake of the Bagoura massacre is a living example to the people which want peace.

The emergence of Likud and Israel's rightist government announced the introduction of the second faction: a group interested in "peace" agreements not peace, in consolidating and

legitimising territorial gains and control not conflict resolution, in facts on the ground not common ground. This faction is led by Netanyahu and his government. As seen from Jordan, Netanyahu has put his own political interests over and above the interests of his country and people. His short-sighted politics are designed to save his coalition government from collapse not his country. Israel's only hope of survival in the long-term is being accepted by its neighbouring countries and peoples. No amount of settlement building, weapon stacking and development, technical or technological superiority can give Israel and Israelis the minimum sense of security needed to lead a normal life.

Netanyahu's politics of "might make right" will force a signature out of Yasser Arafat for a "peace" agreement drafted and negotiated in an Israeli-cabinet meeting. A choiceless, demoralised Arafat will try to market the next agreement as an achievement. But like the previous ones it will further alienate the Palestinians and serve as a spark for the next intifada. The game is Netanyahu's choice and Arafat's no-choice.

The Oslos and the Hebron and the likes to come are the fuel on which the third faction is feeding on. The faction that believes the conflict is religious, eternal... a zero-sum game. The adherents to this school are the most committed to the conflict. They are will-

ing to give their heart and soul for their "divine" right in the Holy Land. As a result of their action, the "city of peace" has been transformed into a city of terror and bloodshed... and worst is yet to come.

Hamas, settlers, Sharons, Shamirs, ultra religious parties are all faithful followers of this school; all or nothing, from the river to the sea, the city of peace is ours, no compromise. This faction feeds on the success of the second faction in drafting problematic agreements, but could only be countered by the advancement of peace between people.

That is why King Abdullah was killed, that is why Rabin was killed, that is why the next victim will be killed.

## LETTERS

## Hope for the distressed

To the Editor:

IT IS a sobering fact that much, if not most, of what one reads in the newspapers these days is distressing. For that reason any positive note is a ray of light, however meagre, and I thought that readers who were distressed by the story of the dog which was shot in Amman lately would be pleased to know that their letters have done some good; the municipality informs me that the Jordan Society for the Protection of Animals (JSPA) have been contacted and they are hoping to find a humane way of dealing with the problem of stray dogs. There is also an enquiry into the unpleasant incident of the other week, so let's all hope that it will not be repeated. Would that other current issues could be dealt with as promptly and positively...

Alia Al Hussein,  
Royal Palace,  
Amman.

## Right tower, wrong place

To the Editor:

FOR THE readers' guidance, we would like to make a correction regarding the caption of the photo titled "Australian tower", on one of the world news pages (Jordan Times, April 2, 1997). The skytower in Auckland, which is part of Harnah's Sky City Casino complex, happens to be in Auckland, New Zealand, and not Australia as stated. The Sky Tower has been topped off with a 92-metre needle taking its height to 328 metres, taller than the Eiffel Tower and the tallest in Australasia, and not Australia as the Reuters photo caption says.

New Zealand Consulate,  
Amman.

## Plea from Black Hebrews

To the Editor:

KING HUSSEIN'S recent decision to open the Hashemiyah Palace to orphans is just one of his loving and caring attributes that make him worthy of being a King. Even before I learned of his most kind and humane gesture, I knew that I wanted to work and teach in the orphanage here in Jordan. I relate very well with children and have much to offer them and hope Jordan will consider my application to work with those who are less fortunate than others. To that end I have left my credentials at the Hashemiyah Palace.

Another matter very close to my heart is the desire for us (Black Hebrews) to live in Jordan. Please realise that Israel does not accept us as being Hebrews; and it is for this reason that we appeal to His Majesty to permit us to live in Jordan.

Reparations to Blacks for the African slave trade is yet a topic of discussion in Congress. While in the U.S., the King should tell the Americans that they are in a position to provide money for Jordan's housing developments, schools and a hospital for my people, as well as for Jordanians. We have so much to offer if you will only give us the opportunity to show you.

Such a proposal would help the Jordanian economy, education system, and provide health benefits for Black Hebrews, as well as for Jordanians. Surely, if the United States government can grant \$3 billion and even more to Israel, then His Majesty, being the mediator of peace that he is, certainly deserves this contribution even more so.

The kindness that the King has shown the Palestinian people encourages me to believe that he will consider this desire on our part to be accepted to live in Jordan. We are not many as not all of us are ready to leave America.

I beseech His Majesty to negotiate on our behalf while he is in Washington so that we may fulfill our dreams of serving and worshipping our God according to what he has taught the Prophet Moses and to live in harmony with the grand people of Jordan.

By the way, my husband (Nathaniel Nelson, P.E.) is one of the top chemical engineers in the U.S. He is capable of establishing Jordan chemical to be competitive with the best in the world.

To the King I say I have fallen in love with his country. The people of Jordan have been kind and helpful in every respect with each other, as well as with myself. I am quite impressed.

Tziona Y. Nelson,  
Amman.



## Society on the Move

## Strategies on 'getting the message across'

The newest weekly in town, *Al Mithaq*, is starting strong, so strong in fact that we borrow from it three interchangeable news items to lead the column with this week. The newspaper quotes "sources close" to former Prime Minister Zeid Rifai as denying an earlier report by the daily *Al-Dustour* that he was appointed Royal Court Chief. There may be a catch in *Al Mithaq*'s news item that the "sources" are denying he was appointed while *Al-Dustour*'s report says he'll be named after His Majesty King Hussein's return from his current trip abroad. In any case "other sources close" to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali are quoted as saying: "the King favours appointing Mr. Rifai to the position, but no decision has been taken as yet." *Al Mithaq*, which some analysts accuse of being pro-East Bank, went on to talk about, in two different corners, new projects by another two former prime ministers, Taher Masri and Ahmad Obeidat. The first, that they'll go to perform the Hajj together, goes without any comment by them. But the report of a formation of a new opposition political party is denied by Mr. Masri, who says in an interview with *Al Mithaq* that there are meetings and converging points of view, but no political party in the pipeline per se.

The weekly also reported that around 25 journalists are expected to run for Parliament this year. It named 16 of those potential candidates as follows: Ahmad Zughailat of the Jordan News Agency, Petra (Ai district, Kerak), Riyadh Huroub, publisher of *Shihan* (Karak), Salem Thiab of Jordan Television (JTV) (Shobak), Adnan Zubi of JTV (Ramtha and Ban Kananah), Shehadeh Abu Baqar of Petra (Balqa), Taher Adwan of *Al Arab Al Yom* (South Shuneh), Saleh Qalab also of *Al Arab Al Yom* (Jerash), Abdul Salam Tarawneh of the Office of the Crown Prince (South Mazar), Tareq Masarwah, chief editor of *Al Arab Al Yom* (Madaba), Awad Salamat of Petra and Abdul Rahim Ghanam of *Al Aswaq* (Irbid), Ahmad Ayasrah (Jerash), Jamal Alawi, a former journalist (Zargal), and Yousif Absi (Amman), Tareq Momani (Ajloun) and Mamdouh Hawamdeh (Jerash), all three from *Al Ra'i*. While some of these journalists have run before, and it is possible that the report is generally correct, we could not check with each and every one of them to be certain.

**TIMELY VISIT:** Scheduled to arrive in Amman Sunday on a two-day visit for meetings, discussions and a lecture is U.S. former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Richard Murphy. Mr. Murphy, who served as ambassador to Mauritania, Syria, the Philippines and Saudi Arabia, will be the guest speaker at a roundtable discussion at the University of Jordan's Centre for Strategic Studies on Saturday. That afternoon he will present an open lecture on the Middle East peace process at the United States Information Service at the U.S. embassy. His other meetings and activities are being held on a more private level, but discussions will certainly focus on the status of the stalled peace negotiations, the call by Arab foreign ministers to suspend normal ties with Israel, and the outcome of His Majesty King Hussein's meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton. Mr. Murphy, who will be accompanied by his wife Anne, will head for Israel after his Jordan visit.

**NORDIC EXPLORERS:** Here on what diplomats might call a scouting mission were the Norwegian Ambassador-designate Jan Joelle and his wife Ann-Elisa. The Joelles were introduced to more than just a few predecessors Tove Kijewski's associates, contacts and friends in Jordan at the farewell reception she hosted before departing on March 26 for her new post at the Ministry of Trade in Oslo. Mr. Joelle is a career diplomat who served in Tel Aviv and Stockholm, and was his foreign ministry's chief of protocol. He will come to Amman around mid-April from his first ambassadorial post in Bern. Mr. Joelle will be the Nordic kingdom's second ambassador to Jordan.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:** The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Michael Hage is in Jordan on his first visit in his capacity as regional information officer. His contacts in Jordan are with United Nations Development Programme resident representative Jorgen Lissner and senior Ministry of Agriculture officials including Secretary General Ghaleb Abu Orabi. The purpose of his visit is four-fold: to strengthen the channels of communication between the regional office and the ministry, particularly in the wake of FAO's new decentralised structure; to follow-up with the ministry and other concerned organisations on the implementation of last November's Rome-

hosted World Food Summit and the resultant Plan of Action to "feed the world;" to meet with ministry officials responsible for communication and information programmes on development; and to build links with the local media. Mr. Hage (pronounced Hajj), a Lebanese national, was appointed to the Cairo-based regional office of FAO a year ago from his New York office where he was liaison officer. Although there is no FAO office in Jordan, Mr. Hage says the rapport with officials here is among the best in the region. Mr. Hage, whose itinerary allowed no time for taking in Jordan's most prized sites, will continue on to Yemen Friday on much the same mission.

**CLEAR THE AIRWAVES!** Jordan Television's Arabic talk show "Events and Personalities" is getting a different face as long-time host Samir Muawwi was appointed minister of state for information affairs in last month's Cabinet overhaul. Moving from his own show, "Under the Spotlight," is Saleh Madi, who has also been chief editor of the station's French news programme. Other new faces to appear, but bright and early, in the morning, will be those of Lana Mamkis, a feminist who writes for *Al Ra'i* Arabic daily, and Jarir Maraga, from Jordan Radio. The two are pairing up to host the continuation of "New Day," the A.M. Arabic news and talk show, that was suspended during Ramadan. The show will be aired again starting Saturday on Jordan Television.

**HEFTY BOARD:** With several of its units up and running, the Amal Cancer Centre organised the elections of its umbrella society, *Al Amal Society*, last Sunday and now has a new Board of Trustees. The 15 board members elected are: Abdul Salam Majali (president), Taher Masri (vice president), Abdullah Khatib (secretary), Wasif Azar (treasurer), Anwar Hadid (assistant secretary), Ayman Hatahet (assistant treasurer), Raef Nejem, Mohammad Said Nabulsi, Said Tel, Hind Agha, Jihan Nabulsi, Mawlood Abdul Khader, Osama Shahed, Yanal Bustami, and Raouf Abu Jabr.

**A QUIET 30:** *Al-Dustour* last week celebrated its 30-year anniversary with much less fanfare than it heralded the milestone in with last year. In an article on the occasion, Editor-in-Chief Nabil Sharif wrote the coming 12 months would be different in that the paper would strive to work harder and develop itself into a platform for true political debate. "We really want to be open to the opinions and viewpoints of all political leaders of the country, but we cannot do that unless we try to raise the ceiling of expression," Dr. Sharif said. Although the event was low-key, the paper was still showered with greetings and flowers from such readers as HRH Crown Prince Hassan, Princess Basma, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, and Senate Speaker Ahmad Lavzi. *Al-Dustour*, the second largest circulating newspaper in the Kingdom, also hopes to complete its computerisation process over the next year.

**AIR TIME FOR JERUSALEMITES:** The London-based Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC) is planning a telethon for the Arab victims of Israeli aggressions in Jerusalem and hopes to raise \$10-\$20 million. This is the fourth such MBC sponsored telethon. The first was for Bosnian victims of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia in 1993 in which the stations raised \$12 million; the second was aired for the children of Bosnia and Hebron and raised \$7.75 million; and the last one in 1996 for Lebanon, in which \$2.4 million were collected. The telethon, which will start on April 11 at 12:00 GMT until midnight will feature reports and statistics on the Arabs who have been evicted from their homes and lands in Jerusalem by the Israelis over the past 50 years. MBC was the first Arab satellite station to conduct live telethons for Arab and Islamic causes. The money raised is expected to be used for a building fund for the construction of homes and housing complexes for the victims.

**HE'S GLAD HE'S BACK:** *Al Bilad* Arabic weekly witnessed a change of sorts at the top of its editorial ladder. Editor-in-Chief Jihad Momani thought he would be writing a column in *Al-Dustour* three times a week, but starting next week that commitment will be extended to five times a week.



French actor Agnes Trede, of the 'French Compagnie de L'Energumene Group,' performs "Introduction to the Audin Theatre" at the Amman International Theatre Festival (Reuters photo)

That being the case, he now finds he has little time to devote to the demanding job of a chief editor. Taking his place at *Al Bilad* is Nasser Qamash, who had once worked with Mr. Momani at *Shihan* weekly, then became chief editor at *Suwt Al Mara*, moved to *Al Bilad* then moved out of the country. Mr. Momani said he would be retained at *Al Bilad* as a consultant. Meanwhile Mr. Qamash took the liberty of his new job at that paper to write a column which was unabashedly headlined "Al Bilad Wants Its Editors Back." "I will never forget the hardships we went through to make *Al Bilad* a respectable newspaper that would play a vital role in the formation of public opinion and the decision making process," Mr. Qamash wrote.

**A CAST OF CASTS:** The Amman International Theatre Festival, which began last Thursday, is still going strong, with groups from the Arab World as well as Sweden, France and the U.S. performing nightly until April 7. The festival, presented by the Fawanees Theatre Group/Jordan, brings novice and seasoned actors to the Royal Cultural Centre stage in performances spanning plays, musicals and dance dramas. Among the more experienced of the actors to come to Amman to attend the festival is Lebanese stage star Nidal Al Ashkar.

**TAPPING ANTIQUITY:** Gerte Bierenbroodspot, the Dutch artist known to take to her subjects by storm, was in Jordan last week, spending most of her time between Taybeh, where she has rented a house, Petra, and Amman. She is currently travelling through Syria and Lebanon, but promises to be back soon. Ms. Bierenbroodspot, a member of the Petra National Trust (PNT) presided over by HRH Prince Raad Bin Zeid, has once again tapped the marvels of Petra, but this time her concentration has been on capturing

nearly life-size images of details of the ancient city's Khazneh (treasury) on rice paper. From those works she is publishing a book. Ms. Bierenbroodspot's interests remain numerous and eclectic. She continues to maintain contact with authorities and organisations concerned with the protection and preservation of cultural heritage sites. Experimenting on a small strip of land outside her home in Taybeh, she planted seeds of some of the once indigenous trees of Petra, hoping to convince someone somewhere that much of the soil erosion in Petra could be stemmed simply by planting these low-maintenance trees. Her visions of staging an opera based on the life of an Arab queen of ancient times is no longer just a vision: Ms. Bierenbroodspot has written the libretto and is moving along with other associates on the score and production.

**WARM THOSE ENGINES:** And just a reminder that the arrival in Amman from Germany of, now 26, "old-timer cars" of the Lufthansa Classic Automobile Club is expected Saturday at the Sheikh Hussein Bridge at noon. The organisers of the caravan event in Jordan are the folks at the Royal Automobile Club (RAC) and the German embassy in Amman. The sponsors are Mercedes-Benz agents T. Gargour & Fils., Forte Grand Hotel, the Jordan Tourism Board, International Forwarders and Kan Zaman. German Ambassador Peter Mende and his wife Margret are hosting a reception for the drivers on Sunday at the RAC. Expected to attend are Their Royal Highnesses Prince Abdullah and Prince Faisal, Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Mohammad Saleh Honani, Minister of Tourism Akel Bilalji, members of the diplomatic corps and the press. Just be sure you've got a designated driver.

Jennifer Hamarnack

## University of Illinois shows off CAVE virtual reality technology

By Gerard Aziakou  
Agence France Presse

URBANA, Illinois — Wearing stereoscopic goggles and using a joystick-like wand, visiting high school girls shriek with excitement as they play a virtual game of soccer inside the University of Illinois's Cave Automatic Virtual Environment (CAVE).

It's open house at the university's National Centre for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) and CAVE lab assistant Vincent Jurgens directs a tour of the centre's panoply of projection-based virtual environments.

The CAVE is a three metre by three metre, high-resolution, environment in which images are rear-projected onto three walls and the floor in rapid, alternative succession to create a 3D

stereo effect. "You can walk inside the simulation, look down so you feel there's reality below you and it's wide enough that you can get the peripheral sense of objects around you," Mr. Jurgens explains.

Viewers wear shutter glasses whose lenses open and close in synchronisation with the images. They navigate through the data or steer the simulation with a three-button wand.

A tracking device attached to the goggles communicates the viewers' head position and orientation to a nearby computer, which continually updates the simulation to reflect changes in perspective.

This virtual reality (VR) space is named for the allegory of the CAVE in Plato's Republic, in which the Greek philosopher explored

ideas of perception, reality and illusion.

With the immersadesk, a scaled-down, foldable version of the CAVE which features a 1.2 metre by 1.8 metre screen, you can zoom in and out of trading pits on a dazzling virtual tour of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange's new trading floor.

In a third VR environment known as the infinity wall — four screens tiled together — you get a three metre image — you get a ultra-high resolution display of a bird hovering over green fields or a sphere inversion in which a sphere is turned inside out and viewed from different angles.

Beyond their obvious entertainment value, the technologies, which were developed primarily at electronic visualisation laboratory at the University of Illinois in

Chicago, have serious applications.

"You are simulating something that does not exist. It's a way to prototype things, to look at abstract information," says Mr. Jurgens.

"Architecture is an obvious (area of application). You can just walk around buildings before they are built."

"You can also do remote surgery or diagnosis. For instance, we do magnetic resonance imaging, 3D scan of a body in which you can just travel through it and see the 3-D structure."

Manufacturers can use the technologies to do mechanical and stress analysis of industrial design.

CAVE software applications have been developed to visualise enzymes, watch tornadoes form from a severe storm, model the human heart or create virtual

urban landscapes.

Every year, hundreds of researchers from the fields of science, engineering, education and business visit NCSA to sample these cutting-edge visualisation technologies.

"We would like them to become a standard for industry and scientists. That will probably take three to five years," says Mr. Jurgens.

A CAVE system, including a powerful computer with state-of-the-art graphics capability, costs anywhere from \$500,000 to \$1 million.

Twelve are in use around the world, including eight in the United States.

"We're working on connecting these VR spaces with each other," Mr. Jurgens says.

## Interim assessment

**Knee Deep in Dishonour: The Scott Report and its aftermath**  
By Richard Norton-Taylor. Mark Lloyd and Stephen Cook  
Victor Gollancz, London 1996. £9.99

**PUBLISHED LAST** February after months of feverish speculation, the Scott Report has already disappeared into oblivion. The 1,800-page tome that many predicted would sink John Major's government caused no more than a temporary furor. Since then, journalists and politicians have moved on to more pressing business as Major's scandal-ridden government enters its last months.

Although Scott has been forgotten by the mainstream press, the three authors of this book were too intimately involved in the affair to let it go. The result of their continuing interest is this slim volume. Although no more than a quickly penned summary of the trio's journalistic coverage of the Scott affair, *Knee Deep in Dishonour* is a useful summary of the background to and the

## BOOK REVIEW

course of the inquiry. The authors nail their political flag firmly to the mast, opening their account with Tony Blair's celebrated speech to the House of Commons on 20 February 1996 when he argued that the government would remain "knee deep in dishonour" if it did not take responsibility for the misconduct revealed by the inquiry. This line is pursued throughout the book, where the authors delight in recounting the incompetencies and lies of a host of government ministers and civil servants.

None the less, they provide a fairly comprehensive review of the whole "arms to Iraq" affair which will be useful to students of the topic until such a time as detached and analytical works on the subject appear.

Andrew Rathmell

# The obsolescence of knowledge

By Jean-Claude Elias

"WHEN PEOPLE say they don't understand computers, I've nothing but sympathy for them." I read this blunt declaration in the last issue of PC Pro magazine, in Derek Cohen's well-known "Pro Log" column. Cohen's sincere feelings of sympathy don't only go to the layman but to the computer professional too.

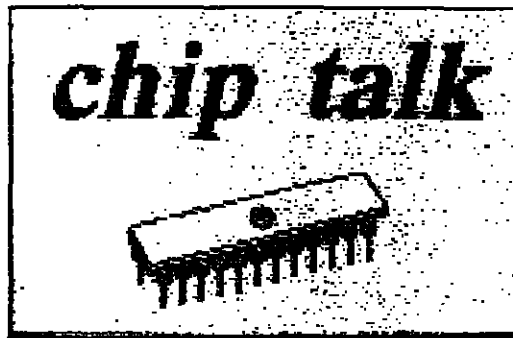
In short, information technology industry is not giving users what they would rather have but what it pleases and suits it to give them. The PCs we buy now should be much more reliable than they are and certainly easier to install and operate. All the software and hardware incompatibilities we have to face and solve all too often shouldn't occur at all.

If a non-professional can be excused for being unable to provide an answer to a certain problem, computer experts on the other hand are expected to explain most if not all difficulties. Well, sometimes they just can't.

What makes someone a computer specialist, much more than his or her academic background, is the amount of experience he accumulates over years of practice. Unfortunately, and unlike other specialists like physicians for instance, a good part of the knowledge and experience of such a professional becomes absolutely obsolete, unusable after a few years of exercise.

Now that most PC users have switched to Windows-based programmes, what good is all the information, knowledge and expertise they have painstakingly gained learning the older MS-DOS operating system? In the early eighties Multiplan was the first electronic spreadsheet, the ancestor of today's Excel. Though all spreadsheets are built on the same original design and principles, Multiplan is as different from Excel 7.0 as a Volkswagen Beetle is from a Formula One Ferrari — you don't drive them the same way and you have to relearn a lot.

Even at hardware level, many concepts have been



completely modified in the last six or seven years. If you knew how to install your first single speed CD-ROM drive under MS-DOS, you can forget this knowledge if your new purchase is a 12 speed IDE model and are planning to install it under Windows 95 — it's a totally different story and whole new process to learn. Back to school again.

Of course to "relearn" doesn't always mean to start all over again from point zero. The acquired general principles in computing don't change much. They remain however, a small part compared to what's new. Some people (did I say masochists?) actually enjoy the continuous effort, the pain to toil on new methods, new problems. It's computer literacy, increased awareness they say. Personally I fail to see the interest of experience one can only archive in a corner of one's mind, never being able to make good use of.

As I was pondering this point in my office this very morning, Riad Al Khouri, the well-known economist and a good friend of mine came in and said to me: "Computers are becoming like a religion to me... the more I know about them and the more mysterious they appear to me."

# Taking as long as it takes

By Samer Ghaleb Bagaeen

THIS IN itself is the saddest part of all: That we are prepared to wait, maybe for a very long time to come, before we are able to see some fruits of some of what we have been calling for over the past few months.

Having called for starting a public debate on whether grand construction projects, such as tunnels, should go ahead without the approval of a citizens' committee, having called for more democracy in the way cities are managed and governed, and having called for the improvement of existing infrastructure before a new one is built, we have now got to be satisfied with watching the bulldozers break the ground at the Third Circle where a tunnel is to be built by the same contractor who had only days earlier submitted the cheapest budget proposal for building this tunnel. Perfectly legitimate so far, but questions have to be asked, if only for honesty's sake.

Meanwhile, and seemingly in a parallel universe, the traffic tunnel down in the Wadi Saqra area of Amman is leaking rain water onto the passing vehicles. And is anybody prepared to do anything to get this problem fixed? No, for apparently, a leaking tunnel is not worth worrying about at this moment in time. And unless it becomes really threatening to public safety, like being in danger of imminent collapse, the current line of thought arguing that Summer is on the way anyway — and the water is bound to stop with its arrival — is likely to continue to prevail.

So, to put an end to this little episode, reality states that this tunnel can wait another year before any kind of refurbishment is contemplated.

Again, it is only fair to wonder whether issuing a small and colourful detour map for the area around the Third Circle one day before imposing a closure is as efficient as the public relations department of the Amman Municipality can aspire to be. It is only fair to wonder, is it not?

At the end of the day, it is important to remember that these words are written with the hope that maybe we can aspire to do better next time.

It is right that we should wonder about all of these things if only to rest assured that we had done our little bit in the grand scheme of things.



Let us move on to something else now. What would you say is the peak of hypocrisy?

I'll tell you. It is pretending to care about little children and initiating campaigns calling for their well-being and safety, but at the same time not being willing to speak out against the murder of these same children by reckless drivers rocketing through residential areas.

This is the sort of thing that should be making the news here at home. This kind of carelessness has to be faced up to. Right now! Public outrage and condemnation against such murderous acts — which is exactly what they are — are immediately called for.

Or are the lives of foreigners worth far more than those of Jordanians? If this is the case, then we should be ashamed of what we have become.

Again, while the rest of the world moves on to bigger and better things, towards a maturity that demands that mobile phones be banned, along with smoking, on trains, and where people are free to express their love for one another, most of us have to be content with meeting our loved ones in secret, in a supermarket, in the vegetables section, and have to tolerate the public nuisance that smokers and mobile phones have become.

But, all is not lost, for we can only be grateful that God has graciously rewarded us with one high ranking official who cared so much about bringing art to Jordan that he wanted Picasso to come to Jordan, in person, to organise and attend an art exhibition. And we are told that our prospects for the future are looking very bleak. Why is that? The answer eludes me.

# JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

## Thursday, April 3, 1997

2:00 Holy Koran  
2:08 Ovide & The Gang  
2:30 Raw Toonage (Cartoon)  
2:45 Curiosity Show  
3:10 They Came From Outer Space  
4:00 N.B.A. Basketball  
5:00 Out Of This World  
5:30 French Programmes  
7:30 News Headlines  
7:35 Parenthood  
8:00 Cinema, Cinema, Cinema  
8:30 The American Chart Show  
9:10 Kung Fu-The Legend Continues  
10:00 News In English  
10:25 Feature Film  
Barbarians At The Gate  
Starring: James Garner & Jonathan Pryce  
Taratata

## Friday, April 4, 1997

2:00 Holy Koran  
2:05 The Mask  
2:30 Flintstones  
3:00 See How They Grow  
3:15 French Programme  
4:00 Crystal Maze  
5:00 News Flash  
5:01 Science & Space Encyclopedia  
5:30 French Programmes  
7:30 News Headlines  
7:35 America's Funniest Home Videos  
8:00 The Health Show  
8:30 Hawkeye (Drama)  
9:10 Frontline (Doc.)  
10:00 News In English  
10:25 Feature Film — Night Walk  
Starring: Rolf Urich & Lesley Anne Down

## Saturday, April 5, 1997

2:00 Holy Koran  
2:05 Adventure of Mickey & Donald  
2:30 Moomin (Cartoon)  
3:00 French Programme  
4:00 Gillette (Sports)  
4:30 Innovation (Doc.)  
5:00 Tilt 23.5  
5:25 Blue Heelers (Drama)  
6:00 French Programme  
7:30 News Headlines  
7:35 Hanging With Mr. Cooper (Comedy)  
8:00 Magazine - 01 (Doc.)  
8:30 Prism (Local Talk Show)  
9:10 Time Trax (Science Fiction)  
10:00 News In English  
10:25 Macgyver (Drama)  
11:00 Feature Film  
Seventh Floor  
Starring: Brooke Shields & Masaya Kato

## Sunday, April 6, 1997

2:00 Holy Koran  
2:08 Jonny Quest (Cartoon)  
2:30 Problem Child (Cartoon)  
3:00 French Programme  
4:00 Global Family (Doc.)  
4:25 Energy Express  
4:50 Our World, Their World  
5:15 Clear Water-Big Fish  
6:00 French Programmes  
7:30 News Headlines

## Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air (Comedy)

7:35 World Echo (Doc.)  
8:30 Side Effects (Medical Drama)  
9:10 Tycoons (Doc.)  
10:00 News In English  
10:25 Hot Shots  
11:15 Sisters

## Monday, April 7, 1997

2:00 Holy Koran  
2:05 Captain Planet (Cartoon)  
2:30 Flintstones  
3:00 French Programmes  
4:00 Nature's Inventions  
4:25 Deep Water Haven  
4:50 Ocean Girl (New Series)  
(Fantasy Action Adventure)  
Extra dimensions (Doc.)  
6:00 French Programmes  
7:30 News Headlines  
7:35 One Foot In The Crave (Comedy)  
8:00 Discover Magazin (Doc.)  
8:30 Murder She Wrote (Drama)  
9:10 Highlander (Drama)  
10:00 News In English  
10:25 Under Suspicion  
11:00 Middle March

## Tuesday, April 8, 1996

2:00 Holy Koran  
2:08 Budgie — The Little Helicopter  
2:30 Grimmy  
3:00 French Programmes  
4:00 Super Sport Follies  
4:30 Dog House (Children Drama)  
5:00 The Album Show  
5:15 Preserving For The Taste Of It  
6:00 French Programme  
7:30 News Headlines  
7:35 The Office (Comedy)  
8:00 Super Stars Of Action (Bruce Willis)  
8:30 Encounter (Local Talk Show)  
9:10 The Nature of Things  
10:00 News In English  
10:25 Snowy River  
11:15 Mission Impossible

## Wednesday, April 9, 1997

2:00 Holy Koran  
2:08 Flintstones  
2:30 Adventures On Rainbow Pond  
3:00 French Programme  
4:00 America's Funniest people  
Escape from Jupiter  
(Space drama for children)  
4:25 Challenge (Doc.)  
5:15 Border Town  
6:00 French Programmes  
7:30 News Headlines  
7:35 Grace Under Fire (Comedy)  
8:00 Soldier's Diary  
8:30 Challenges (Local Talk Show)  
9:10 Spencer For Hire (Drama)  
10:00 News In English  
10:25 Cobra  
11:00 Hart To Hart

# ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

Mohammad A. Shuqair

## AMAZING FACTS



\*\* A Korean footballer played with the ball over his head for 10 hours, 57 seconds non-stop during which the ball had never touched the ground.

\*\* A USA citizen used to escort his pet cat on regular picnics for water-skiing.

\*\* An American has had a hiccup since 1960. He hasn't recovered yet.

\*\* An American woman continued to write a letter to her sister for eight consecutive months. It became clear afterwards that the letter contained 1,113,747 words.

\*\* There is a golf playground on the boundaries that separate Sweden from Finland. It is open round the clock for those who are fond of practising such a game during summer.

## LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

\*\* I often go to the cinema.  
Ath'hab elas-sinama kathiran.

\*\* I never play cards.  
La al'ab al-waraq abadan.

\*\* She sometimes gets over my nerves.  
Innaha totheer a'sabi ahyanan.

\*\* I am not quite sure.  
Lastu muta'akkidan tamamen.

\*\* You seem all abroad.  
Tabdoo annaka sharidul-fikr.

\*\* Please, come nearer.  
Iqtarib, min fadlek.

\*\* Let us go out for a walk.  
Hayya bina nakhroj linatamash'sha.

\*\* I'll wait for you here.  
Sa'antziroka hona.

\*\* You have to do it now.  
Alayka an taf'al thaaleka al-aan.

\*\* I'm at your disposal.  
Innee rahnu isharatek.

## LAUGH-IT-OFF

• HE: "How about a little kiss, honey?"  
SHE: "Can't. My lips are chapped."  
HE: "Aw, c'mon. One more chap won't hurt you."

\*\*\*  
• A LAWYER went to a judge to complain that the client whom he had just won a case refused to pay his fee.  
"Did you present your request in writing?" asked the judge.

"Yes, I did, sir," replied the lawyer.  
"What did he have to say?" Continued the judge.  
"He told me to go to the devil," answered the lawyer.  
"Then what did you do?"  
"I then came straight to you, sir."

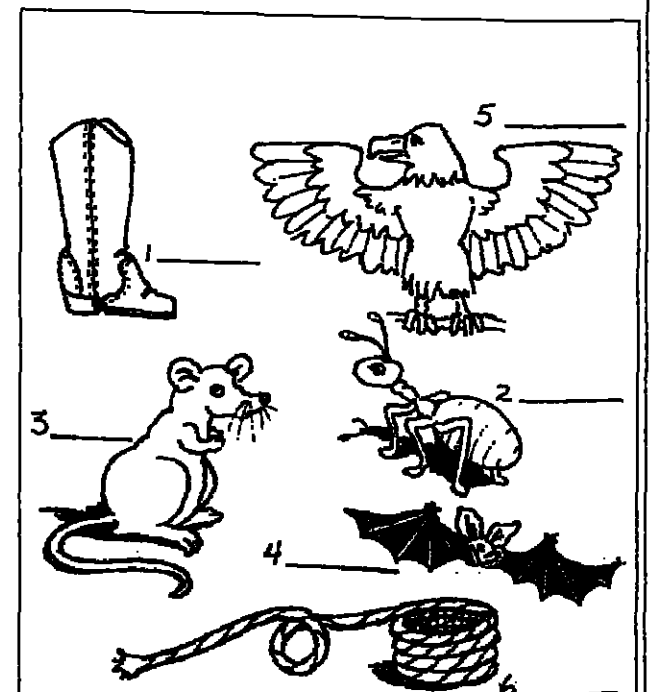
## BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. Who were the Minutemen?
2. How long did Adolf Hitler promise the Germans his Third Reich would last?
3. What is a gargyle?
4. What would you expect to do in the loggia of a building?
5. What is a miracle play?

## PUZZLE ME

THREE hundred years ago, dentists did not exist. If you had a toothache, you had to make an appointment with the local.....

Write the name of each object pictured in the spaces provided. The first letter of each word will fill in the opposite blank.





## Juliette Binoche — an actress going from strength to strength

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Juliette Binoche won the best supporting actress Oscar here for her performance as a Franco-Canadian nurse caring for a mysterious wounded man in *The English Patient*.

She beat out Marianne Jean-Baptiste (*Secrets and Lies*), Barbara Hershey (*The Portrait of A Lady*), Lauren Bacall (*The Mirror Has Two Faces*) and Joan Allen (*The Crucible*).

"I'm so surprised... I thought Lauren (Bacall) was going to get it and I think she deserves it," said Binoche. "This is a dream, it must be a French dream I think."

Since her sensual face has invaded cinema screens, from Paris to Hollywood via Prague and London, Binoche has been going from strength to strength.

"I am an actress," Binoche said backstage after accepting her award. "Whether I come from France, it doesn't matter to me... You can work wherever you like when you know the language."

She said she used English while working on the film

*Lovers On The Bridge*. That when her appetite to learn English so she could work in a greater variety of productions, she said.

Binoche said she had no regrets about beating the 72-year-old Bacall but expressed hope the American film legend would win an Oscar "while she's alive."

Wonderful, radiant, intelligent, are the adjectives most often used to describe Binoche, who was awarded the top award at the Berlin Film Festival last month for her role in Minghella's film.

Binoche, who played Moliere's *Le Malade Imaginaire* in high-school as a teenager, has become Hana, the Franco-Canadian nurse who has the care of a mysterious "English Patient" with whom she is passionately in love.

Binoche, who embodied Anna in *Fatale*, also starring Jeremy Irons, and Anna in *Mauvais Sang*, is Hana again in Minghella's movie, a young woman who grieves the loss of a great love, relives her neighbour's pain and who henceforth discovers new reasons to live and to love.

Early on, the teenager impressed major film directors such as Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Doillon, Andre Techine, Louis Malle and even Steven Spielberg who wanted her in the blockbuster *Jurassic Park* — but she favoured Krzysztof Kieslowski instead.

Far from being a sophisticated vamp, the actress is also famous for being naturally fresh, unpretentious and genuine.

"There is a love story between her and the camera, her presence and intensity are astounding," said Malle.

But Binoche never forgets that the "actor's role lies in self-oblivion." "For me, the most beautiful present is to see passion grow in the spectator's eye," she says.

She led a quiet childhood shared between divorced parents. Her mother would set up theatre plays in the school where she was teaching, probably helping her daughter find her vocation from an early age.

Binoche soon came to Paris to attend drama school.

The story goes she was working in a department store to pay for her studies

when she was offered a small part in *Hail Mary* by French director Jean-Luc Godard.

Then she played in Jacques Doillon's *Family Life* and, at age 20, in Andre Techine's *Rendez-Vous* which brought her into the limelight at the 1985 Cannes Festival. "A star is born" was the headline at the time.

The young actress then became Leos Carax's muse in *Mauvais Sang* and *The Point-Neuf Lovers* in which she played a fine arts student, an opportunity for her to take up painting again.

Meanwhile, Philip Kaufman offered her her first foreign experience in *The Unbearable Lightness Of Being* with Daniel Day-Lewis. She starred also in *Wuthering Heights* with Ralph Fiennes, today's "English Patient."

She received a French Cesar Award and a Volpi Cup at Venice Mostra for her role in Kieslowski's *Blue*.

Mother of a young boy, Raphael, Binoche is secretive of her private life which she preserves and cultivates in a French country cottage.



Actress Juliette Binoche holds her Oscar for best supporting actress backstage at the 69th annual Academy Awards Monday. Binoche won the award for the film, *The English Patient* (Reuter photo)

## TV drama fails to wash with critics

German overseas developments chiefs thought they would promote themselves among an apathetic public by buying their way into the plot of a TV drama series. The idea backfired in many people's view but might be repeated in an amended form

By Hugh Williamson

COLOGNE — "Let me through — I'm a doctor!" shouts Dr. Frank Hofmann, as he rushes to treat a German lying injured on a South East Asian beach after a water-sport accident. The audience holds its breath, until, finally, the physician brings his patient round.

Sighs of relief — but this is only the beginning. The heroic Hofmann has a tougher challenge ahead: How to save a Thai medical centre from the hands of a corrupt pharmaceutical company and a criminal gang.

BMZ's commitment to grassroots health care and to backing projects which help locals to help themselves.

Tippawan Dascha, a Thai education worker living in Germany, goes further. "Every aspect of Thai life in the series was false," she says. The few Thai characters that did appear had foreign names, such as Jasmin and Pin Lo, and an important marriage scene took place in a temple, an event "unheard of in Thailand," as Buddhists marry at home or in hotels.

Ironically, such criticism could provide welcome additional publicity for BMZ. By its own admission, it is unknown to most ordinary people, despite the efforts of its long-serving minister, Carl-Dieter Spranger.

BMZ's state secretary, Wighard Haerdil, says that, apart from the ministry's 10 minutes, it was not responsible for the series contents. And he is proud that an estimated 9.5 million people tuned in for the drama.

"The general public aren't interested in development policy, so the media also isn't interested. It's a vicious circle," Haerdil says. "With this project we tried to reach the wider public. It's a slow, step-by-step process, but we have to break out of the development policy ghetto."

To make his point he quotes a BMZ-funded opinion poll on the series, which found that two-thirds of viewers felt the series had shown "how important the BMZ is."

But making further progress may be difficult. A boom in private TV stations in Germany is exposing public channels to tougher competition. This has led to more entertainment programmes and fewer documentaries — on development and other issues for which the public stations have been renowned.

"Compared with only a few years ago, there's less coverage of developing countries on the screen," says Karl Merz, an editor with a major regional public channel.

So even the critics agree that new strategies — possibly including more soaps-for-development — are needed. The dispute is over the methods of pursuing these strategies. Haerdil admits that "things could be improved next time," without elaborating.

The pressure groups and independent experts are more explicit, suggesting that development-focused writers should be consulted before the completion of the script.

Next time, they hope, Hofmann will have not only medicines, but also a convincing message in his bag when he runs across Thailand's sun-kissed beaches — Gemini News.

## 'Beastly' ban on beauty-business danger warning

By Alan Martin

SUDBURY, Canada — The bare back of a woman moves rhythmically, in time with her groans. On the wall behind her, pictures flash of scantily-clad fashion models.

It has all the trimmings of another North American television advertisement using sex to sell a product — until the camera pans around to capture a different angle: The woman leaning over a lavatory, vomiting.

A voice asks viewers: "Why are nine out of 10 women dissatisfied with some aspect of their own bodies?" It replies by stating: "The beauty industry is the beast."

This is the latest "uncommercial" produced by Adbusters, a media foundation based in western Canada that uses spoof and satire to draw attention to the excesses of consumerism and the advertising industry.

The advert was produced to appear during fashion-related television programmes in a week of events in early February to promote eating-disorder awareness. But the United States-based Cable News Network (CNN) and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) refused to air it during the desired slots.

Mimicking a well-known commercial by a prominent clothes company, the advert was commissioned by women's organisations and healthcare centres across Canada to demonstrate the relationship between the fashion industry and eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia.

The makers of a controversial television advert depicting a darker side of the slim-is-beautiful industry have been prevented from showing it during fashion-related programmes on two big networks. The move has led to accusations of censorship and hypocrisy

While CNN and CBC appear to have found the advert in bad taste, Adbusters editor Kalle Lasn accused the channels of unfair censorship.

"The fashion industry is, as far as their advertising and the message they put out, a really dangerous industry," he says. "Over the years, by reaching people when they are very young, they have created a kind of distortion of people's self-esteem, sexuality and body image."

"The ad is very compelling and not really over the top at all — even if the puking image is hard to take."

Lasn says the advert is simply attempting to raise public consciousness of the issue, and that many viewers would agree with its message.

Vicki MacDonald, coordinator of the eating-disorder clinic at the General Hospital in Sudbury, Ontario, says: "Exposure to a culture that condones and supports thinness as a way to success, attractiveness and acceptance can have a devastating effect on a young person who might be dealing with a variety of vulnerabilities."

A recent study by the National Eating Disorder Information Centre in Toronto found that 40 per cent of girls had dieted by the time they were nine years old. It reported that North Americans annually spend more than \$33 billion on the diet industry, \$20 billion on cosmetics and \$300 million on cosmetic surgery.

Tom Curzon, CBC's senior of media and public relations, says the decision not to run the advert was based on corporation policy. According to CBC guidelines, commercials advocating a particular point of view, such as the ones produced by Adbusters, should not be aired on theme-related shows.

"Ads containing political or social messages," explains Curzon, "can run only during 'neutral' programmes."

However, the public broadcaster puts no such prohibitions on product advertising, leading Lasn to ask why Revlon, Calvin Klein and other brand labels can buy time on CBC's programme, *Fashion File*, while a consortium of women's groups concerned about sometimes-fatal eating disorders cannot.

A potential boycott of *Fashion File* by fashion industry advertisers was another factor CBC officials had to consider in making their decision, says Curzon.

But it is for CNN, the Atlanta-based news network of media baron Ted Turner, that Lasn holds the most scorn.

He accused them of "stonewalling" Adbusters when they were trying to get their "uncommercial" shown — "not returning our

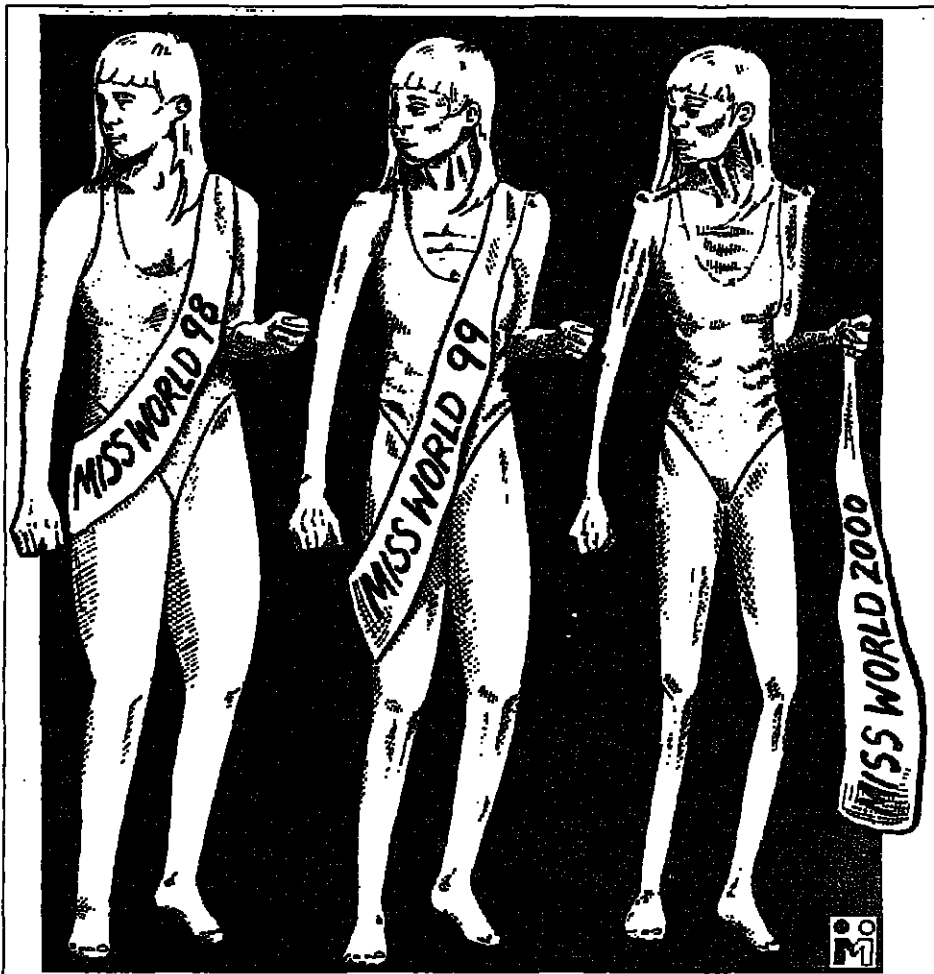
phone calls." He added: "It's a very cynical way to stifle freedom of expression."

A CNN official said a decision not to screen the advert had been taken for financial reasons.

In the end, Adbusters decided that if they could not reach the big fashion audiences, they would not show it at all on television. However, it is available on the Internet.

For Lasn, who has made numerous other "idea-based uncommercials" criticising the alcohol, tobacco and motor industries, the fight is far from over.

"This is something a healthy society has to counteract somehow," he says. "So we would very much like to continue going head-to-head with the Calvin Kleins of the world, and slug it out in the free marketplace of ideas" — Gemini News.



## Spice Girl clones marching up the Thai charts

By Thanaporn Promyanyai  
Agence France Presse

●BANGKOK — If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Britain's provocative Spice Girls, currently riding at the top of the world's pop music charts, have some very serious fans in Thailand.

The Angies are the latest music phenomenon to hit Thailand, where young pop stars are routinely rolled off an assembly line to the acclaim of screaming teenagers — if not the critics — for a short life in the spotlight.

Clad in tight midriff shirts and colourful miniskirts, the heavily made-up Angies pose and pout in slick music videos which are enjoying heavy rotation on Thai television every afternoon above the stock market ticker.

In Thailand, where each

grinning new pop star who emerges from the industry's marketing offices looks like a carbon copy of last week's sensation, the radical Angies are looking overseas for their models of success.

With one Angie sporting dyed blonde locks and another a similarly un-Thai frizzy brown hairdo, the five-member group is obviously thinking British style.

"The British singers were our inspiration and the genesis of the Angies," said Jumpol Thongtan, music manager for Polygram, the Angies' record company.

Those singers are the Spice Girls, who recently became the first group to hit number one on the British charts with their first four singles and came away from the British Music Awards recently with armfuls of silverware.

Jumpol said that although the Angies had adopted the Spice Girl look — and particularly their sexy dance moves — the group had tried hard to salvage some originality with their music.

"If we copied everything the fans would not be interested because it would be nothing new," he said. "Therefore we decided to make some differences in the music and melodies to make it more Asian."

Competition in Thailand's music market is heavy duty, and newcomers and smaller companies are constantly looking for different eye-catching styles to compete with the major record companies, Jumpol said.

Two big companies, Grammy Records and RS Sound, dominate Thailand's one billion baht (\$40 million) a year pop

music industry, with a score of smaller firms fighting it out at the bottom for the rest of the spoils.

The Angies' production manager, Nattaphen Suwanrat, said that starting up the Angies project was a risky move for the record company, as it was not clear if young Thai consumers would embrace a radically different group.

So far, at least, the Angies have not opted to have their tongues or navels pierced as their British counterparts have done.

However, their image is far more daring than that crafted for most Thai pop stars.

Thai pop singers tend to be young, well dressed and clean cut, crooning from a repertoire of soothing ballads. Few of the top teen idols have dyed hair and even fewer cavort about the stage in

micro-minis.

However, the group says the tactic has paid off.

"The feedback has been very good, most teenage magazines have been showing an interest in the Angies," Nattaphen said.

Polygram officials said that about 80,000 angies cassettes have been shipped across the country to the acclaim of teenagers everywhere.

"In several provinces, the Angies are in the top five," Jumpol said. However, he added that the record company would not know for sure exactly how many records the group had sold until next month.

Before the Angies were plucked from obscurity by the record company, three of the girls were working as dancers for other Thai pop stars.

The career switch, they said, was not too difficult — although learning how

to sing took some time.

"We started off as dancers when we began our careers," said May, a 19-year-old with frizzy brown hair. "We could dance any style we wanted to. Now that we are singers, we can sing any way we like."

Nok, 21, the dyed blonde Angie, says that while the image of the group is provocative by Thai standards, the older generation is not too concerned about the girls' untraditional look on stage.

"Older Thais understand that everything we do is part of a performance," she said. "But they know that when we get off stage, we are actually very Thai."

# Exercise is a form of eating disorder for some

By Ira Dreyfuss  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Exercise can make a person thin — sometimes, dangerously thin.

"I pray there will be a day when I won't think about the food I eat or the exercise I do," said Marah Bobilin. "I don't know if there's a specific day or time when I will be all better."

For Bobilin and others like her, burning calories is a symptom of an eating disorder. Bobilin was diagnosed with anorexia, a condition

she fed with obsessive aerobic exercise.

The term for it is "debriding," said researcher Denise E. Wilfley of San Diego State University and the University of California, San Diego. She has been studying and treating people with anorexia and bulimia.

"They feel they have to earn calories before they can eat," Dr. Wilfley said. "And it can be the converse. If they overeat, they feel they have to punish themselves because they have overdone the number of calories."

Although starving is still

the main weight-loss method for anorexics, as bingeing and purging is for bulemics, exercise seems to be growing for both, according to Dr. Wilfley.

There are no good figures on how many people with these disorders use exercise for weight control, but the numbers are probably very small. Dr. Wilfley said. However, the trend seems to have become more common as styles in beauty changed, she added.

For Bobilin, an 18-year-old Florida State University freshman, the condition

began as a 15-year-old in her home town of Huntsville, Alabama. She responded to family problems by working out in a gym.

"I thought if I lost weight, everything would be better," Bobilin said.

This purpose of exercise is not the same for someone with an eating disorder as it is for an athlete training hard for an event, Dr. Wilfley said. People with eating disorders are doing it to be thin, and any competition would be secondary, she said.

Solitary running tends to be the exercise of choice, Dr.

Wilfley said. It can burn a lot of calories, and the only limit on it is the time or the distance that the runner can invest. But it is not the only exercise. Bobilin recalls running 10 kilometres a day when she could not get to the gym to do her 10 kilometres on the stair climber.

Also, overexercise breaks down the body instead of building it up, although an obsessive exerciser might not see this. Bobilin remembers overlooking her constant hunger and headaches, her reduced ability to concentrate and the blisters on

her pelvic girdle.

Runners motivated by an eating disorder would feel guilty after missing a run, while other runners would only feel regret, Dr. Wilfley said. "All I did was worry about when I could exercise and how much I could eat," Bobilin said.

"Eating disorders are expressions of what these adolescents can't say with their words," commented Sondra Krounberg, nutritional director of Eating Disorder Associates in New York. At its foundation is a lack of self-worth, she said. "They

strive to be thin as a way of feeling good about themselves."

Treatment can involve improving self-image, recognising the trouble signs of the disorder, and learning proper eating and exercise techniques. The earlier the problem is detected, the more likely it is that treatment will be successful, Ms. Krounberg said.

For Bobilin, treatment came after a beloved aunt and uncle were shocked at her appearance. Following about a month in an inpatient facility in Florida, she began

outpatient therapy, which continues. But it can be hard to get through the denial in people with eating disorders, which is one reason why Bobilin tells her experiences in such publications as the magazine Seventeen.

"I would like to say I am recovering, which is fine," Bobilin said. "I exercise, which is fine, but I want to make sure my motivation is not to lose weight but to have fun."

She is now three or four pounds (about 2 kilos) below her ideal weight, Bobilin said.

## U.S. researchers find new cancer-fighting gene

By Grant McCoil  
Reuters

NEW YORK — A new gene has been identified that may help in the early detection and treatment of brain, breast and prostate cancer, researchers said.

The discovery, by a young New York researcher and a team of scientists from several laboratories, showed great promise but was not expected to help patients directly for some years, scientists said.

The researchers found that when the gene, called P-Ten, is active in human cells, it suppresses cancerous tumours. But when a cell is lacking P-Ten, it frequently leads to tumour advancement.

"Understanding this pathway, which we don't understand yet, is going to be a very important target for the research group in my laboratory," research leader Dr. Ramon Parsons told a news conference announcing the finding.

"It's going to take a long time and involve many more laboratories than mine," said Dr. Parsons, senior author of the research which was also published in the March 28 issue of the journal Science.

Dr. Parsons, 35, an assistant professor of pathology and medicine in the Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Centre and the departments of pathology and medicine at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Centre, made the discovery with Dr. Michael Wigler of Cold Spring Harbour Laboratory in New York.

"Although initially mutated in breast cancer, we found mutations of P-Ten in brain and prostate cancer and expect to find mutations in other cancers as well," Dr. Parsons said.

P-Ten is a suppressor gene, or a gene that restrains the body from the tendency to create tumours. Changes or mutations in that gene interfere with its sup-

pressing effect and several different cancers appear to have a relationship to it.

"The change in that gene in some people puts them at greater risk for cancers, and this discovery says that we'll probably be able to develop a test to find out who might have genetic changes like that," said Dr. Herbert Pardes, dean of the faculty of medicine at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons.

"It may help us give better information about the prognosis for cancer patients and it's another step in the direction over the next five or so years of finding treatments to block these cancers," Dr. Pardes said.

Dr. Parsons said that unlike other mutations of genes found in hereditary predispositions to cancer, most P-Ten mutations are found in the more common sporadic cancers. More than 80 per cent of all cancers are sporadic.

P-Ten received its name from its similarity to phosphatases and to tenascin, part of a complex of proteins that sits below the cell surface and which may be involved in the spread of tumours. It is located in the chromosome 10. The role of this chromosome in the development of various sporadic cancers has been investigated for nearly a decade.

Scientists said it was too early to know whether the gene may help families detect hereditary cancer.

"We have to establish that this gene is associated with familial cancers and that hasn't been shown yet, but it may. And if it is, we have to develop a diagnostic test that is incredibly reliable — 99 per cent is not reliable enough," said Dr. Karen Antman, an internationally recognised expert in breast cancer who is director of the Herbert Irving and Columbia Presbyterian Centres researching cancers

## New therapy could help Huntington's

LONDON (R) — U.S. and French researchers said they had identified a possible new treatment for Huntington's disease, using genetic engineering.

Dwayne Emerich of Cytotherapeutics Inc. CTIO, which specialises in such research, along with colleagues at Inserm in France and the Oregon Health Sciences University said cells engineered to produce a chemical that protects brain cells could be injected into the brain.

Reporting in the science journal Nature, they said the approach worked in monkeys.

Huntington's disease is a rare neurological disorder that hits victims mostly in middle age and gets progressively worse.

Caused by inheriting a single defective gene, it starts with involuntary twitching, mental deterioration and eventual death.

There is no treatment. It is characterised by a degeneration of neurons in the striatum area of the brain.

A natural body chemical, Ciliary Neurotrophic Factor (CNTF), helps striatal neurons grow and Dr. Emerich's group decided to test it out on Huntington's.

CNTF is a cytokine: A chemical sent out by cells calling for help from the immune system when they are damaged.

The team genetically engineered baby hamsters to secrete human CNTF in their kidney cells, then injected these cells, encapsulated in polymers, into the brains of monkeys.

A week later, they injected acid into the monkeys' brains to simulate the effects of Huntington's by killing off neurons.

They killed the monkeys and looked at their brains — and found the CNTF had helped many of the striatal

cells survive.

They urged further study of their findings, which they said could apply to other diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, also characterised by degeneration of brain cells.

"Biologically delivered human CNTF may help prevent cell loss and its associated behavioural abnormalities in these disorders," they wrote.

Cytotherapeutics signed an agreement with Genentech Inc. GENE in November to collaborate on treatments for Huntington's and similar diseases.

## Microspheres could help the medicine go down

By Maggie Fox  
Reuters

LONDON — A new drug delivery technique, that uses tiny polymer balls to bypass destructive digestive juices could help diabetics throw away their needles and even boost gene therapy, U.S. researchers said.

The polymer globules, called microspheres, get safely through the stomach with its digestive acids, stick to the walls of the small intestine and even pass through them, getting right into cells, the researchers reported.

Edith Mathiowitz of the Department of Molecular Pharmacology, Physiology and Biotechnology at Brown University in Providence and

colleagues said the microspheres could be used to give insulin to diabetics, who currently must inject, or to deliver genetic material in gene therapy.

"We show that these microspheres increase the absorption of three model substances of widely different molecular size: Dicumarol, insulin and plasmid DNA," they wrote in a report in the science journal Nature. Many drugs break down in the stomach, or pass straight through the digestive system. Scientists are always looking for better ways to get drugs into the body.

This is especially hard in the still-experimental field of gene therapy. Gene therapists have yet

to find a vector, or delivery system, that reliably gets DNA into cells without causing disruption.

Building on work by other researchers, Mathiowitz's group said they had noted that polymers could stick to the surface of the intestine.

They did tests on rats and found the polymers in microsphere form worked their way through the rat's intestinal walls by threading in between individual cells as soon as one hour after the rat ate them.

Cells whose function is to absorb substances had soaked up the microspheres. "Both spleen and liver tissue samples, with apparently normal-looking hepatocytes (cells), showed a large number of microspheres," they

wrote.

When dicumarol, an anti-coagulant drug that is not easily absorbed by the body, or insulin were put into the microspheres, these were absorbed better and lasted longer in the body than when given in the form of conventional injection or tablets.

Dr. Mathiowitz's group said that to their surprise the system also worked well with DNA used in gene therapy.

Tests would have to be done on humans, as people and animals often respond very differently. But Dr. Mathiowitz's group said they hoped their findings offered a new means of drug delivery.

## Cells that suppress HIV identified

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — Researchers in California said on Wednesday they had identified cells that suppress the reproduction of HIV and their findings could arm scientists with new weapons in the fight against AIDS.

The cells, known as "naïve" cd4 T cells, mount the body's initial response to infections such as HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. About half of all cd4 T cells circulating in a healthy adult are "naïve."

HIV cannot replicate in these cells and, as a result, cannot directly harm them, according to a study by Mario Roederer, a genetics

research associate at the Stanford University School of Medicine south of San Francisco.

"If we could figure out how they suppress replication, that could lead to a therapy," said Roederer, whose study appears in the April issue of the Journal of Clinical Investigation.

Stanford University said Roederer's findings were bolstered by the results of a similar study published in March that showed that HIV replication was impaired in naïve cd4 T cells.

Roederer suggested that researchers could take cd4 T cells from people with

HIV and allow the cells to multiply. This would eliminate the virus from their cells, he said.

"Then you could give them back their own virus-free cells," said Roederer, lead author of the study.

Roederer said his findings add to the evidence that something other than viral infection destroys T cells in HIV patients.

"Since HIV doesn't kill naïve T cells, something else must be causing the loss of these cells in people with HIV disease," he said, adding that the deterioration of the thymus gland may be the cause.

All T cells migrate to the

thymus — a chestnut-sized gland at the base of the throat — where they are "taught" to recognise foreign molecules, or antigens. The thymus then releases the T cells into the bloodstream, where they lie in wait to intercept invaders. Because they have not yet encountered any antigens, these cells are called "naïve."

"Our current theory is that it's the destruction of the thymus that is causing the abnormally low levels of T cells," Roederer said. "But we don't really know."

## ANSWERS

### BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. An armed militia of American colonists who, before the War of Independence, announced that they were ready to join up and fight "at a minute's notice" when called to arms.

2. 1000 years. In fact, it lasted but twelve years, from 1933 to 1945.

3. It is a water-spout of stone projecting from a gutter, shaped like a grotesque animal or weird human face. It carries water from the roof of a building clear off the walls, and is a medieval building feature.

4. If it had one, you might walk about or sit down and enjoy the sun. It is a covered outdoor area, open on one or two sides, but attached to a building, generally at ground level.

5. On the eve of an important saint's day, in medieval Europe, people acted out plays about the

saint's life, dressing up in costume and imitating the legendary aspects of the saint's life as well as the realistic parts. Quite often the staging of a miracle play was an excuse for a great feast afterwards.

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### PUZZLES

1. Boot
2. Ant
3. Rat
4. Bat
5. Eagle
6. Rope

The word is BARBER

## WEEKEND CROSSWORD

PAGING POLLYANNA  
By Don Johnson

ACROSS

- 1 Mr. Hemingway
- 5 — island
- 10 Descriptive position
- 14 Bore
- 15 Roof feature
- 16 Artist Magritte
- 17 — oval (three)
- 21 Daydream
- 24 Told's
- 25 Violent attack
- 26 On the — (three)
- 27 Crotch
- 28 Canadian people
- 29 — of Philip
- 30 Veracity
- 31 Impressed clearly
- 34 Put in cargo

DOWN

- 1 Room
- 2 Stemless
- 3 Face
- 4 Colours
- 5 Tenner
- 6 Colony
- 7 Sheep pen
- 8 Copy room
- 9 Raised platform
- 10 Come before
- 11 Full of noise
- 12 Los Elais —
- 13 Debutant's "La —"
- 14 Depute
- 15 Mute of poetry
- 16 Fun of
- 17 Streaming
- 18 Sit
- 22 Fishing game

Diagramless, 19x19  
By James Burrick

ACROSS

- 1 Part of sword
- 4 Approach
- 5 Grating of baseball
- 9 Voice to me
- 10 Bunch
- 11 Leg and
- 12 Jackson
- 13 Collision
- 14 He plus —
- 18 Off
- 20 Open for
- 21 Discussion
- 22 Down
- 23 Carous building
- 24 Starts prematurely
- 25 One city
- 26 Violent
- 27 Curved letter
- 28 Part from which to start

DOWN

- 1 Jar
- 2 Carous building
- 3 Starts prematurely
- 4 One city
- 5 Violent
- 6 Curved letter
- 7 Part from which to start
- 8 Jar
- 9 Starts prematurely
- 10 One city
- 11 Violent
- 12 Curved letter
- 13 Part from which to start
- 14 Jar
- 15 Starts prematurely
- 16 One city
- 17 Violent
- 18 Curved letter
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# If the world will not help, we must fight alone

Wole Soyinka has been charged with treason by the Nigerian government. From his U.S. exile, the Nobel laureate pours scorn on the accusations



Wole Soyinka

WHEN I wrote in my latest book, "The Open Sore of the Continent", that "the judicial murder of the Ogoni and the continued decimation of Ogoni people was the first Nigerian experimentation with ethnic cleansing, authorised and sustained by the Nigerian despot General Sani Abacha," some critics in foreign ministries described this as the language of an activist given to dramatising his opponents' action.

Prior to this grotesque display of savagery by General Abacha, he had acceded to the plot of the chieftain of his Ton-Ton Macoutes, Ismaila Gwarzo, to fabricate a coup d'état. Those who succeed as, or are suspected of acting as, couriers of details of the secret kangaroo court proceedings of those alleged to be involved in the coup, are rounded up and sentenced to stretches varying from seven years to life imprisonment.

The standard charge is "concealment to treason." The chairman of the Campaign for Democracy is already among the victims of this madness and the two ex-military rulers of Nigeria were also jailed for "levying war against the Federal Republic of Nigeria." Countless others have been held without being charged for the crime of "association" with the so-called coup plotters. Yet none of this appears to be a sufficient signal to the world.

Now that Abacha has prepared a list of 14 people, myself included, for a charge of "levying war against the Federal Republic of Nigeria by conspiring with others to explode bombs" and "causing explosion in several parts of Nigeria," perhaps some will see why Ogoniland is only the model for the actualisation of a totalitarian onslaught on liberated, politically sophisticated sections of the Nigerian polity which have dared expose and confront the power obsession of a minuscule but obdurate hegemony.

The only way Abacha knows to deal with political opposition is not to negotiate, discuss or debate, but to liquidate its leaders. And if he cannot contrive this physically through his executioners (as with the more than 200 demonstrators mowed down by his soldiers in 1993), then he'll seek to repeat the phantom coup d'état or the tragic Saro-Wiwa experience.

This time, he is biting off more than he can chew. However much Abacha may harass or intimidate the democratic opposition, our central position remains that Abacha is not the legitimate president of Nigeria and his regime is not its legitimate government, any more than an armed robber is the legitimate possessor of the property he has stolen.

It is very difficult for us to be surprised by this predictable despot and his gang. The build-up had been clear from the outset. If I had been in Nigeria when the coup was engineered, I'd have been the first on the list of those to be arraigned. Although I am not an Ogoni, I would probably have featured on the list of those sacrificed for speaking out against genocide in Ogoniland.

So this whole orchestration has been set in motion since I became Abacha's most prominent nemesis. I was supposed to have been in Benin Republic on Jan. 28, attending a meeting of labour leaders and students, where "we planned to disrupt the local government election."

At the time in question, I was in Davos in Switzerland at the World Economic Summit and among my witnesses are Nelson

Mandela, Yasser Arafat, Kofi Annan and Benjamin Netanyahu. Yet the regime's intelligence came out with the details of my meeting in Benin Republic on television!

As though this was not enough, Abacha granted an interview to the Washington Times newspaper in February, where he repeated the allegation that I am a terrorist responsible for all the bomb blasts in Nigeria. The Washington Times is now facing a libel suit for the indiscretion of publishing this blatant lie.

I and other members of the democratic movement are already condemned to long jail sentences for another "reasonable offence." This combination of diversion, bloody-mindedness and lies will not intimidate the opposition into silence. Neither will it confuse any discerning observer as to the true state of things in Nigeria, which is the reign of terror unleashed by Abacha. Dissent in Nigeria will not go away until Abacha has gone.

Yet it is important to put Abacha into perspective. He knows that he is nothing without his foreign collaborators in Nigeria's agony.

What further proof is demanded by the world? Why have African leaders — heads of states and revolutionary veterans — failed until now to halt Abacha's repetitious game or to challenge his transparent play of purchasing time? Take the regime's elaborate charade called "transition to civilian rule." Even as it becomes clearer by the day that Abacha, ever the ludicrous imitator of his predecessor Ibrahim Babangida, is seeking to perpetuate himself as a civilian president, foreign governments continue to say let's wait a little longer. Really, he has promised us, he has given his word that this time, once this latest exercise is over, he will make his pronouncement.

Now that Abacha says it is his constituency's decision whether he should run or not, and that he will not be the first military man to seek electoral veneer for his dictatorship, the world continues to wait on him.

However, just in case

the compliance of his hypnotised watchers and consumers of Nigerian oil begins to wear thin, Abacha has stumbled on the perfect plot: concoct treason charges against Soyinka, Enahoro and others, and while that case drags on in the court in which he is judge, jury and executioner, declare your presidential ambition.

Yet the world watches in cold complicity as this conspiracy to eliminate all real and imaginary opponents to Abacha's dictatorship is concretised. Even though the world knows that nobody credits the work of a judiciary ousted from the right of adjudication on any issue that involves the military, its regime and its servants.

In fairness, Nigeria watchers also know a few local collaborators, some of them with impressive radical pedigrees, who assist them in rationalising any situation. They also know elements within the political class who also reinforce their alibi for inaction — and even for covert diplomatic sustenance of the terrorist at the helm of power.

Those governments that believe that Nigeria's Godot is just around the corner in the labyrinths of Aso-Rock Fortress are no friends to the Nigerian people. They have forgotten their own history or, for reasons best known to them, have chosen to patronise us, to treat us as second-class subjects of the historical process.

Perhaps, though, their intent may be to deliver the message that we do not hear, or that we are too complacent in the certitude of justice to understand: which is that our destiny rests in no other hands but ours.

If that is so, we welcome the distressing signals and their implicit challenge. Our commitment remains to the enthronement of genuine democracy, as expressed on June 12, 1993, and to the permanent removal of the military from our lives, in whatever guise they may appear. This, we know, is no small task but we are prepared for a marathon.

The Guardian

# Microcredit in Jordan must stand on its own feet

AMMAN — When Aisha, a housewife from Rusaifa, decided to take a small loan to buy thread for her modest embroidery business, her husband tried to stop her. But Aisha was persistent, arguing that it was more humiliating to borrow from relatives than from lending programmes which provided working capital loans to small entrepreneurs like her. Besides, without the cash to buy thread, she would no longer be able to continue sewing.

Her husband agreed, and Aisha joined a group lending and savings programme where she took out a JD 75 loan. She invested the money in her embroidery project, and soon she began earning a net profit of JD 25 to 30 a month. With the extra income, Aisha found that, for the first time, she was able to buy clothes for her five children without turning to her husband for money. "Since I took the loan, I feel different," she says. "My husband has become very proud of me and appreciates my support."

Once Aisha pays off her loan in weekly instalments, she becomes eligible for a larger loan in the programme's second cycle. With her future earnings, Aisha plans to put some money aside for her children's education and to fix up her home. The Group Guaranteed Lending and Savings Programme which Aisha joined has serviced nearly 4,500 borrowers since it was founded in 1994 by Save the Children, a non-governmental organisation (NGO).

Aisha's success story has been repeated in many developing countries around the world, from Egypt to Indonesia and Bolivia, with microcredit, or small loans which target poor entrepreneurs, especially women. Such case studies have demonstrated how the poor have improved their standards of living with modest, short-term loans. More importantly, they have confirmed that the poor are indeed creditworthy and able to repay their loans, with interest, from profits generated by their activities. Leading microcredit programmes boast repayment rates as high as 98 per cent — greater than that of commercial banks.

Microcredit is not a new-sprung development initiative. It began more

than two decades ago, when Mohammad Yunus, an economics professor in Bangladesh, loaned \$27 to 42 poor people — about 65 cents per person — to buy necessities for their income-generating activities. His pilot lending evolved into what is today the largest microcredit bank in the world, the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, reaching two million people with over \$1 billion in loans.

Why has microcredit gained so much acceptance? Because for the 1.5 billion people around the world who live below the poverty line it is nearly impossible to obtain credit from a commercial bank without any collateral. And for the banks, the cost of processing such small loans are high. NGOs have learnt to fill this niche by providing microcredit to a large untapped market — poor entrepreneurs.

In a typical microfinance scheme, borrowers form themselves into a group in which members must guarantee each other's loans. They meet regularly to share the progress of their projects and make payments. The group's support and social pressure substitute traditional collateral requirements and ensure that loans are repaid. When every member has successfully repaid the loan, the group is then qualified for a second loan and so forth.

The microcredit movement has caught on quickly in Jordan where an estimated 15 per cent of the population live in poverty. Earlier last month, four major donor agencies (United Nations Development Programme, United States Agency for International Development, World Bank and the European Union) organised the Jordan Microfinance Conference to build a dialogue between local practitioners and international experts on "best practice" techniques in a Jordanian context. The conference was the first follow-up to the high-profile Microcredit Summit held in Washington, D.C. in February where a pledge was made to reach 100 million of the world's poorest people with microcredit by the year 2005.

In Jordan, there are about a dozen organisations, among them NGOs, government agencies and financial institutions, that provide microcredit through a network of local communities. A 1996 World Bank survey has shown that as much as JD 24 million has been made available to 7,000 borrowers and the available loan fund is expected to double in the next two years. What is remarkable is that if family members of borrowers are taken into account, then approximately 56,000 people have benefited so far from the microcredit programmes in the country.

As charitable as it may sound, microfinance actually has little to do with charity. Microcredit programmes charge interest rates and fees and expect loans to be paid back on time. This has raised eyebrows in official and business circles here which feel these stringent requirements burden the poor. What is not initially clear to opponents of interest rates is that such programmes must recover their costs if they are to continue expediting small loans with minimal paperwork on a regular basis. "If interest rates are too low," explained Richard Rosenberg, senior advisor at the Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest, during the conference "the programme will die when the donor money stops."

In the past, conflicting signals have been sent to the poor by microcredit programmes in Jordan which did not properly monitor loans and enforce repayment. This altruistic character has left NGOs struggling today to draw a distinct line between microcredit and charity to those who turn to them for loans. To compound this problem, microfinance practitioners are operating in a legal vacuum which neither allows nor restricts them to disburse loans and deposit savings. In the event that a borrower defaults on his or her loan, microcredit programmes have no policy backing that would enable them to recover their loans.

In spite of these obstacles, some microfinance programmes have been expanding their operations to reach the poor in urban as well as rural centres. The Near East Foundation (NEF), a foreign NGO, has set up nine credit funds which have been passed on to local communities to operate. According to Sameera Al Majali, NEF's credit officer, "decentralised schemes have been successful because in the end, the project belongs to

the community so they look after it well." The NEF has tailored its programme to appeal to Islamic values by providing, murabaha, or in-kind credit.

Experts, however, have cautioned against disbursing loans without proper screening of clients and projects. "You do a disservice to the poor if you don't target them properly and put them in debt. Microfinance must target the working poor," stressed Djenan Khayatt of the World Bank. Microcredit in Jordan has generally been directed towards income-generating activities, such as embroidery, raising chickens and goats, and trade.

"The poor are not stupid," said Mr. Rosenberg in his lecture on sustainability at the conference. "When women come back for more loans, it is proof that microcredit is making an impact in their lives."

But how much of an impact can microfinance make in Jordan without a consensus on interest rates and with the charitable orientation of many NGOs? High hopes are pinned on the commitment demonstrated by donors, officials and grassroots organisations during the three-day conference. And these days, donor support has been quite generous. The government of Jordan has embraced microcredit as a critical component of its Social Productivity Programme, designed to fight poverty and unemployment. Last month, UNDP announced a \$41 million global MicroStart programme at the Washington Microcredit Summit. USAID has allocated \$120 million for microenterprise development worldwide for 1997 alone. The World Bank is currently funding 56 microfinance projects in 39 countries.

To be sure, donor capital for microfinance schemes will begin to dwindle sooner or later. In the words of one participant in the conference who declined to be named, "microcredit is the flavour of the month." When the flavour fades and donor capital disappears, the only microfinance programmes that will be left standing on their feet are the ones with "best practice" techniques that enable them to recover their costs and loans.

UNDP feature

## King holds talks with U.S. officials

(Continued from page 1)

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh was quoted on Wednesday by the BBC as denying that Jordan was mediating between Iraq and the U.S.

"Motivated by humanitarian reasons Jordan is trying to speed up the implementation of the U.N.-Iraq oil-for-food accord because any delay in the implementation of that agreement is

bound to increase the suffering of the Iraqi people in addition to harming Jordan's economy," said Dr. Tarawneh.

Dr. Tarawneh said: "Jordan does not interfere in Iraq's internal affairs but will continue to serve as the Iraqi people's gate to the outside world and insists that Baghdad implement all U.N. resolutions and refrain from interfering in other countries' affairs."

Asked about prospects of an Arab summit which would include Iraq, he said: "We have not received any invitation for such meeting and I do not believe an intention exists for calling an Arab summit at the moment. However, Jordan will remain committed to a pan-Arab consensus in this matter."

King Hussein conferred with President Bill Clinton on Monday on how to halt a new cycle of Israeli-Palestinian violence, and Mr.

Clinton said he was personally prepared to do anything he could to save the Middle East peace process.

He indicated that personal intervention might move forward within a week or so if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu went ahead with plans to visit with American Jewish leaders. "I expect to see him," the president said.

"We've got to try to keep the lid on things over there ... It is not going to be easy," Mr. Clinton said,

## U.S. steps up efforts to save violence-torn peace process

(Continued from page 1)

until Mr. Arafat proves his determination to halt violence. In an apparent response, the Palestinians arrested 30 members of the group blamed for Tuesday's failed suicide bombings in Gaza.

Asked if Israel had anything to offer the Palestinian leadership in return for stopping attacks on Israelis, Netanyahu's spokesman Shai Bazak said: "First of all and as a first condition, the cessation of Palestinian terrorism — and only then the continuation of diplomatic negotiations."

Mr. Bazak, the prime minister's media adviser, told army radio that Mr. Netanyahu would tell Mr. Clinton that Israel was unyielding in its resolve to build the Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

He said the Israeli leader

would arrive in Washington on Monday morning and return home the same night. "We go to Washington with a clear desire of ours and I think the Americans to clarify to the Palestinians that if terrorism continues it will be hard to continue the peace process at the same time," Mr. Bazak said.

Mr. Clinton, involved in Israeli-Palestinian deals since the first was signed at the White House in 1993, pledged to get personally involved again on Tuesday when he met King Hussein in Washington.

"I'm prepared personally to do anything I can to get this process back on track and move it forward," Mr. Clinton said.

Palestinians demand that frozen negotiations resume not only on Israeli security needs — but on all peace

issues at once.

They complain that Jewish settlement building pre-empted the results of final peace talks yet to come on the status of East Jerusalem.

"The building at Har Homa (Jabal Abu Ghneim) will continue," Mr. Bazak said. "He (Netanyahu) will say that to Clinton. He has said that to the whole world and he will say it again. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and we have the right to build in it."

An opinion poll of 509 Israeli Jews published on Wednesday in the newspaper Maariv showed 52 per cent backed continuing construction of the settlement.

Mr. Moratinos, the EU envoy, meanwhile confirmed that Mr. Arafat was willing to begin accelerated negotiations on a final peace accord with Israel in exchange for a freeze on Jewish settlements.

## 13 Israeli soldiers injured in attack

(Continued from page 1)

ed 30 Jihad members after two militants died in apparent failed suicide attacks against Jewish settlers in the Gaza Strip, leaders of the group said Wednesday.

Islamic Jihad officials said their militants were arrested Tuesday and overnight in the Gaza Strip, but they denied that the group had any involvement in Tuesday's bombings.

"These two attacks were prepared and planned by the Israeli Shin Bet and Mossad to help Israel's political situation," said Abdullah Shami, a senior official in the movement, referring to the Israeli secret services.

"Islamic Jihad in Gaza announces that it had nothing to do with these two attacks," he told reporters.

## Under the Patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor Al-Hussein "Nothing in life is truly bad, not even cancer" ~ Terry Fox

The Canadian Embassy

Al-Amal Cancer Centre

Invite you to JOIN  
The 3rd Terry Fox / Al-Amal Centre Run  
Friday April 26, 1997

Starting 9:00 a.m. Walk or run from Al-Hussein Sports City's back lot (Gate 4) to Al-Amal Centre and back to Al-Hussein Sports City, for public awareness activities, and entertainment you DON'T want to miss!! (We welcome sponsorships for food and refreshments.)

Help raise cancer awareness & raise funds for cancer research in Jordan  
The Terry Fox run, is an international event, held in over 43 countries worldwide. It commemorates Terry Fox, a 19-year-old Canadian, who had his leg cut off because of cancer. Still Terry set out to run across Canada, preaching:

"Nothing in life is truly bad, not even cancer."

IF HE CAN DO IT... SO CAN YOU!

Ticket price: JD1 for children, JD5 for adults.

Get a free T-shirt & cap with each ticket (hold on to your ticket for raffle prizes). Ticket sales at: Al-Amal Centre, the Canadian Embassy, Safeway, Music Box, Babiche, Freddy For Music, and Power Hut, Alahlia ~ Abela.



## Israeli high technology sector seen building basis for future growth

TEL AVIV (R) — The light at the end of the tunnel of Israel's slowing economy may very well be the glow of a computer screen.

The central bank's 1996 annual report, presented to parliament's finance committee on Tuesday, said that the growth of Israel's gross domestic product (GDP) slackened last year but the high technology sector flourished and was building the basis for future growth.

"The fast growth rate of past years slowed in 1996...but at the same time the growth trend continued in capital stock — both physical and research and development stock — mainly in the sectors rich in capital and human resources," the central bank said.

"This is creating an appropriate basis for future export growth," it concluded.

Israel's GDP grew just 4.4 per cent last year, down from an annual rate of six to seven per cent in the first half of the decade.

The bank attributed the slowdown to the bus bombings early in 1996, which caused tourists to cancel reservations and Israel to close its borders to Palestinian workers from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

It also cited the political uncertainty generated by last year's general elections as well as the dwindling benefits of the wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

But while the rest of the economy took a hit, Israeli makers of electronics, software and pharmaceuticals were barely touched.

Exports in Israel's "traditional" industries fell 1.5 per cent last year but high-tech exports surged 9.1 per cent, the Bank of Israel said. It estimated technology accounted for 80 per cent of Israel's industrial exports last year and 3.4 per cent of overall exports.

"The big growth in these sectors was supported by foreign investors — both private investors and those who invested through public offerings (of Israeli companies) in overseas stock markets," said the report.

Israeli companies, nearly all of them high-tech, raised \$761 million overseas last year, 2-1/2 times the amount in 1995.

"In some of these sectors bigger (export) growth was constrained by the severe shortage of workers in certain professions," the bank said.

In fact, the bank said the decline in Israel's unemployment rate to 6.7 per

cent last year from 6.9 per cent in 1995 was due to job growth in high-tech.

The Bank of Israel suggested that high-tech may even provide a cure for Israel's sluggish productivity growth. After rising 3.0 per cent a year in 1990-92, Israel's productivity declined in three out of the next four years, the report said.

But, the bank noted, high technology is more capital intensive and generates higher output per employee.

"We expect that if the trend seen in 1996 towards an increased weighting for high technology industries (in the economy) continues, in the end overall profitability and productivity for industry will also rise," the bank concluded.

The Bank of Israel warned, however, that continued growth of the country's high-tech sector was threatened by the appreciation of the Israeli shekel since 1994.

Israel's high-tech is almost all geared for export, but the shekel gained 4.1 per cent last year, according to an index prepared by the Bank of Israel. The shekel's appreciation makes high-tech products less price competitive in overseas markets.

## Kuwait mulls attracting more foreign investors

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait is considering several steps to attract foreign investment including easing ownership limitations in local firms, a minister said Tuesday.

"We have issued a decree to form a committee to study all matters in the area of foreign capital," Commerce and Industry Minister Jassem Al Mudaf told Reuters.

"The purpose is to encourage and attract foreign investors," said the minister adding that the committee would study changes to a trade law which limits foreign ownership in local firms to a maximum stake of 49 per cent.

Trade in Kuwaiti shares is also restricted to nationals of Arab Gulf states. Any change to the law requires approval by parliament and the emir, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah.

"Who would want to put his money in a Third World country company without having a say in what it does with it?" said an economist. "Good economy signs are not the only ingredients to make money, regulations should be on your side."

Visiting officials often tell Kuwaiti counterparts that limitations on ownership discourages foreign investors.

## REUTERS

## REUTERS

### The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CAD	ITL	NGN	TRY	SR
US Dollar	1.6715	0.6087	1.4386	122.71	1.3863	1660.00	1.8808	5.6250	
DE Mark	0.5983	1.0000	0.6306	163.33	0.6306	1.6600	1.8808	5.6250	
GB Sterling	1.6429	2.7470	1.0000	163.33	0.6306	1.6600	1.8808	5.6250	
CH Franc	1.6429	2.7470	1.0000	163.33	0.6306	1.6600	1.8808	5.6250	
JP Yen	0.0081	1.3610	0.4854	1.0000	0.0081	1.3610	0.4854	1.0000	
CA Dollar	0.7470	1.2610	0.4854	1.0000	1.0000	1.2610	0.4854	1.0000	
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0006	0.3821	135.43	0.0006	1.0006	0.3821	135.43	
NG Guinea	0.5400	0.5400	0.3821	135.43	0.5400	0.5400	0.3821	135.43	
FR Franc	0.1778	0.2968	0.1080	25.5555	0.1778	0.2968	0.1080	25.5555	

Energy		Unit	Price
Brent	18.20	18.25	
WTI	20.25	20.25	
Bony	18.20	18.25	
Dubai	17.20	17.25	
UCL Gas	199.00	203.00	

Mid-East Currencies		Unit	Price
SA Riyal	0.2668	0.4458	0.16231
Yemen	0.2668	0.4458	0.16231
KW Dirham	3.3047	5.5248	2.01167
Qatar	3.3047	5.5248	2.01167
CY Pound	1.9973	3.3373	1.2152

Metal Prices		Unit	Price
Gold (ozs)	350.6	351.1	
Silver (ozs)	4.36	4.36	
Platinum (ozs)	370.5	371.6	
Al (3 Months)	1530	1531	
CU (3 Months)	2354	2358	
Zinc (3 Months)	1303	1304	
Lead (3 Months)	688	690	
Ni (3 Months)	7650	7670	

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)		Period	Rate
USD	5.52	1-3	5.70
DEM	5.52	1-3	5.70
JPY	0.50	1-3	0.41
DEM	2.98	1-3	3.40
FRF	3.22	1-3	3.31
ITL	7.22	1-3	7.30

Energy		Unit	Price
Commodity	203.42	351.1	
Coffee (ozs)	1525	1525	
Sugar (ozs)	310.3	310.3	
Wheat (ozs)	0	0	
Soya (ozs)	22.91	22.91	
Oil (ozs)	140	140	
Barley (ozs)	0	0	
Rice (ozs)	500	500	

JOD Cross Rates		Unit	Price
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	
GB Sterling	1.1858	1.1724	
DE Mark	0.4237	0.4258	
CH Franc	0.4504	0.4526	
JP Yen	0.1258	0.1265	
NG Guinea	0.3787	0.3786	
FR Franc	0.2427	0.2428	

## Turkish growth raises fears on inflation, debt

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkey's economy grew by nearly eight per cent in real terms last year, raising fears the economy is overheating.

Markets reacted calmly to the news but analysts warned Turkey faces increasing inflation, ballooning government debt and a burgeoning trade deficit.

Analysts said there are few signs that the government was prepared to take action to slow growth and reduce inflation.

"The expected slowdown in the first quarter of 1997 does not look to be there,"

said economist Turgut Tokgoz. "And the economy does not look like it is going to cool down on its own, so it looks like Turkey is going to experience further growth at the expense of upsurge macroeconomic and fiscal balances."

On Monday the State Statistics Institute reported real gross national product rose by 7.9 per cent in 1996 compared with 8.0 per cent in 1995.

The economy grew at an annual rate of 8.8 per cent in fourth quarter 1996, faster than the 8.0 per cent in fourth quarter 1995.

"Turkey has been growing by 8.0 per cent for two years, but it has external deficits — the economy needs to be slowed down," economist professor and columnist Deniz Gokce told Reuters.

Analysts expect Turkey's foreign trade deficit to be around \$20 billion for 1996, up from \$14.1 billion in 1995.

Inflation is currently running at around 78 per cent a year and the government budget deficit was \$10.6 billion, or 8.2 per cent of gross national product, in 1996.

## HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 1997

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) Plan an itinerary and stick to it today, and avoid wasting time, which could be better spent on career activities. A good friend can help you get a new project started, so listen to him or her and use what is discussed.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) You should not try to settle an account today until you have discussed it with a clever friend who is an expert in this area. Share your ideas with your mate and make him or her feel that you respect his or her opinion.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) Opportunities abound today, however, seize only those which you know to handle. Make some plans later this evening for an important trip you must take and make every effort to bring your mate along.

**MOON CHILDREN:** (June 22 to July 21) Bring your potentials to the attention of a superior today, and you can make some quick progress. Labour on getting your home in order, so that later this evening you can invite close friends and other guests over.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) A progressive friend can give you some great ideas today on how to use more modern methods of operation in your business activities. Show your appreciation for the help later this evening, by going out on the town.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) A jealous fellow associate could make big difficulty for you today, so steer clear of this person until a more appropriate time. If anyone offers you their support later this evening, be sure to take it.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) An investment opportunity may become apparent today, however, be sure you don't tax your budget and not have any funds for emergencies. Stick with tried-and-true methods of operation and thereby you will be successful.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) Experts in business and family friends today can be quite helpful to you in beginning some new project, so pay attention and you could learn something. Be more helpful to your mate later this evening and he or she will be appreciative.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) Catch up on correspondence today which you have neglected for quite some time. Modern methods of operation can help your business interests, thereby gaining the respect and admiration of those in authority.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) Your mate may have a good idea for improving your monetary status today, so listen carefully to what is said and apply the suggestions. Labour on improving the condition of your home and thereby increase its value.

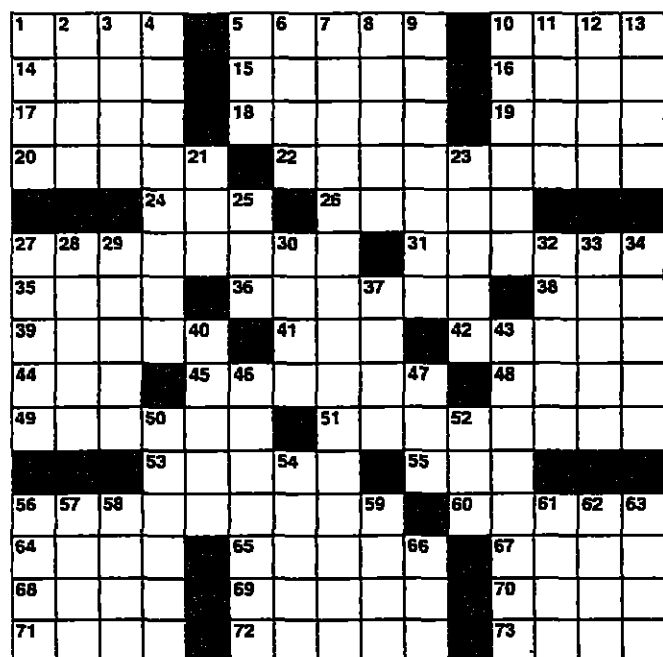
**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) You should not procrastinate today about presenting your ideas to superiors, otherwise you won't get noticed and become quite successful. Buy a nice gift for your mate, and tonight can be a very romantic one.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) This is an ideal day today to confer with your loved ones about how to make the days ahead much brighter. Invite some trusted friends in tonight thereby you and them can have a fun time with recreational activities.

## THE Daily Crossword

### ACROSS

- Egotist
- Violin family
- Taj Mahal site
- Tibetan priest
- Halley's find
- Blutonium
- Assert as a fact
- Run for romance
- Flogging rod
- First sci-fi writer?
- Lively
- Wing
- Rends
- Briny
- Replied salad
- Campbell or Morrell
- Removes the restraints
- Literary collection
- Attempts
- Frequently to Frost
- Tour of duty
- Shoe width
- More upset
- Chills and fever
- Abale
- Courageous
- Mortise's partner
- A Ryan
- Celestial bodies
- Brazen
- Barrel brew
- Supreme Court justice
- Hyson and oolong
- Nemesis
- Philippine island
- Otherwise
- Choir part
- Ford flop
- Colorer



by Alan Olschwang

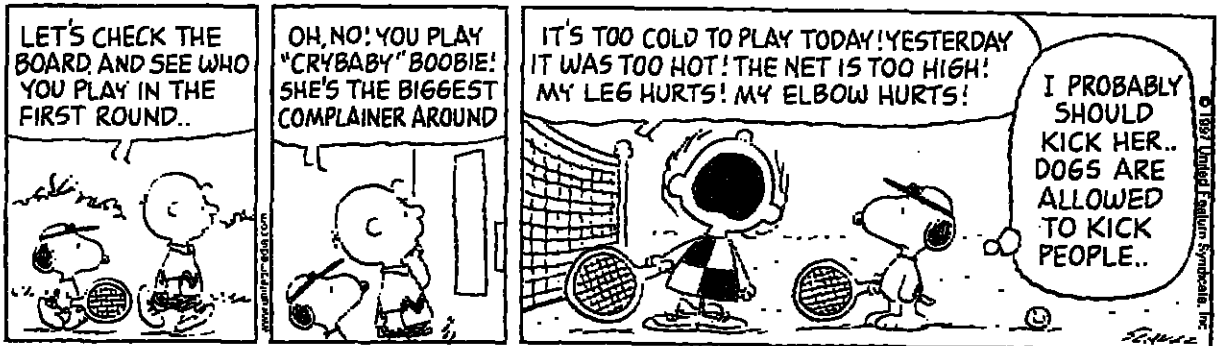
SLIP	AKELA	SPAR
CEDE	ROVED	PALE
AGAR	MAINEMESIS	
RAH	WELL	ONSET
FLORID	DASTARD	
SOS	ICE	MAD
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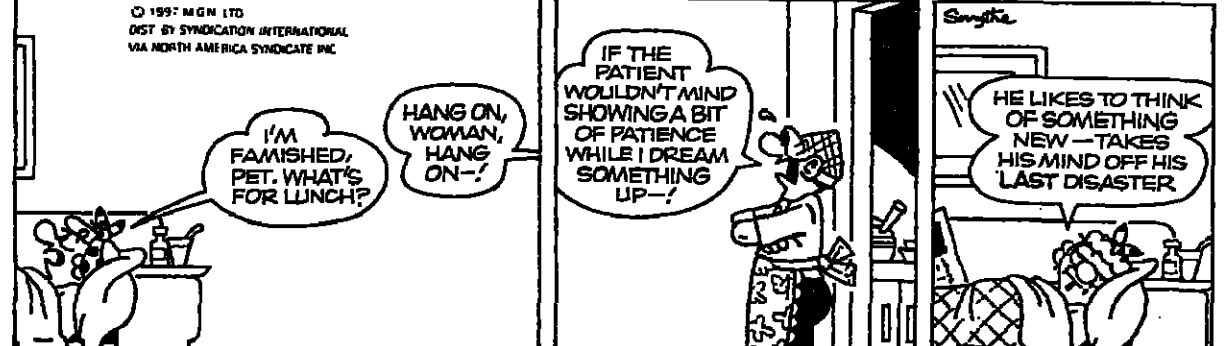
### DOWN

- Eastern
- European
- Wheel hub
- Hebrew measure
- Pesky crustacean
- King conqueror
- CIA snoop
- Long time
- Plains dwelling
- Repeat
- The way in
- Horned ruminant
- Rajah's wife
- A Baldwin brother
- Member of a fraternal order
- Offensive
- Feel sick
- Asian palm
- Street show
- Zodiac sign
- Anon
- Type of antelope
- Boredom
- Old hat
- Kind of gun
- Pilot
- Established as a goal
- Dignity
- Lamb later
- Rec room item
- Marsh
- Lubricated
- Swedish rock group
- Close tightly
- Omar's offering
- Location
- Depend
- Roses' place
- North Sea feeder
- Kinsman: abbr.

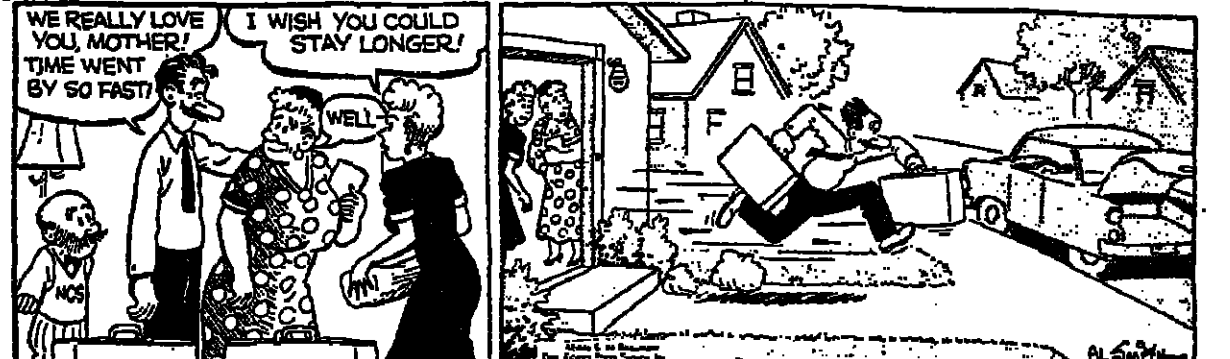
## Peanuts



## Andy Capp



## Mutt 'n' Jeff



## HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) Have a chat with a good friend today, however be sure to avoid any disagreements. If you entertain any guests tonight, stay within your budget, thereby you can have some extra funds for any emergencies.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) Find a way today to make more money in the business world so you can get your property properly repaired. Pay attention to health matters so that you will not only feel good, but you will look all put together.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) You may find that fellow associates act strangely towards you today, however, take this in stride and keep busy at your favourite recreational activities. Later this evening will be good to seek out knowledgeable people for advice.

**MOON CHILDREN:** (June 22 to July 21) Even if you are bored at career activities today, don't act that way or you could get into a great deal of difficulty. Be kind to a troubled fellow associate and he or she will show his or her appreciation in many ways.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) If you listen to some suggestions from a good friend today, you could profit greatly from these ideas. Try to please your mate more later this evening and make you happier and more comfortable in the days ahead.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) If a family friend tries to start a disagreement today, take this in stride and maintain your poise. Be sure to pay attention to your regular duties, so that you will gain the recognition and appreciation of a bigwig.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) Don't take any risks in motion of any kind today, and be more concerned about the state of your health, thereby avoiding any unscheduled time off. Finish any projects you have started thereby becoming quite successful.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) A responsibility you have taken on today could make you feel tense, however, honour your promise and finish this matter up promptly. Later this evening you can attend recreational activities with close friends.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) You must use patience today with a person who takes nothing seriously, or you could lose your temper and accomplish nothing all day. Later this evening will be a good time to meet with fellow associates on a new project.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) You should not allow a fellow associate to distract you today from your duties and cause you to make errors which won't look good with bigwigs. Put off recreational activities until your career activities are all completed.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) If you proceed cautiously, you can take a calculated risk today and get good results for your efforts. Be willing to do what your mate enjoys later this evening and thereby make him or her appreciative towards you.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) Some condition at home today may be annoying you, however, handle it objectively and calmly. If any unexpected guests stop by, be hospitable and polite, thereby making them feel welcome and peaceful.

**Birthstone of April:** Diamond — Amethyst



## Arab fund plans \$1b window to lend to private sector

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) has drawn up plans for a billion-dollar fund to lend directly to private sector projects, an official said Wednesday.

The board of governors will consider setting up a window through which AFESD can lend to the private sector when they meet in Abu Dhabi on May 10, an

AFESD official told AFP.

Proposals have been sent to the governors ahead of the meeting outlining a fund of up to \$1 billion to be directed at private sector development projects throughout the Arab World, said the official, who asked not to be named.

The funds will be raised gradually after the launch as projects arise, with Kuwait-based AFESD injecting up to \$500 million and the remainder coming from other sources, the official said.

At present, AFESD provides concessional financing

to the public and private sector but only with government guarantees, while the new fund will do away with the need for those guarantees.

AFESD, which had paid-up capital of more than \$2.2 billion at the end of 1995, was set up in 1974 to support development in the Arab World.

It has 18 member countries all belonging to the Arab League, while the biggest shareholders are Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

## UAE banks see high profits in '97 after good '96 results

ABU DHABI (AFP) — United Arab Emirates (UAE) commercial banks expect to perform better in 1997 after recording their highest profits since the oil boom of the early 1980s, bankers have said.

"Last year was one of the best years for the UAE banking sector since the end of the oil boom and we expect an even better year in 1997 because of an economic upturn and strong interest rates," a UAE bank manager said.

Most of the Gulf country's 28 foreign banks that released 1996 results have reported an increase of more than 10 per cent in their profits mainly due to higher demand for credits to the trade and construction sectors.

Of the 19 national banks, 15 of them have published their balance sheets showing net profits surging by 17.4 per cent to 2.29 billion dirhams (\$623 million) from 1.95 billion dirhams (\$531 million) in 1995.

"There was a general upswing in the UAE banking system in 1996 as there was growth in their profits, assets and deposits," said Ziad Dabbas, share-dealing director at the state-run National Bank of Abu Dhabi.

"There are expectations such a strong performance will continue through 1997. This has positively affected the prices of shares of banks," he indicated.

UAE banks concentrate their activities on providing loans in the absence of other

major investment opportunities in the oil-rich region.

Bankers said the high profits in 1996 were due to a surge in loans and advances caused by an upturn in commercial and construction activity. This was in turn a result of higher government spending due to strong oil prices.

Official figures showed credits extended by the UAE banks exceeded 96 billion dirhams (\$26.1 billion) by the end of 1996 compared with 91.5 billion dirhams (\$24.9 billion) by the end of 1995.

"There was a strong demand for loans last year and the trend is continuing this year as there is a strong activity in the trade, real estate and construction sectors," said Zuhair Kaswani,

a leading UAE stockbroker.

"Other reasons for the good performance of banks include higher demand for personal loans and lower provisions for bad and doubtful loans," he said.

Several banks in the UAE suffered from large losses in the mid-1980s due to the accumulation of bad debts after many debtors failed to pay back when a steep decline in oil prices plunged the region into a recession.

Some of them had to merge to avert collapse while others were forced to transfer all their profits for the loan loss provisions.

"The problem is nearly over and you can say the banking sector has now entered a new phase of sustained growth," a foreign bank manager said.

### Daily Beat

#### Akarco distributes dividends at a rate of six per cent

**\*\* THE REAL Estate Investment Company (Akarco) will be distributing JD282,900 in cash dividends to its shareholders after the general assembly authorised the distribution of dividends at a rate of six per cent compared to four per cent in 1995.**

According to the company's annual report, Akarco boosted its profit by 40.6 per cent last year to JD373,100 as its total earnings amounted to JD460,000, 32.3 per cent above the 1995 earnings. Most of the earnings, or JD360,900, came from rent income of the building known as Akarco Centre at Abdali and the remaining JD115,200 were the amount collected from the sale of lands owned by the company at the Nwejees area. The company owns 60 per cent of the Akarco centre.

According to Akarco board chairman Jamil Barakat, the company plans to increase investments by moving into building apartments for limited income groups on a plot of land at Nwejees and selling other plots of land. "This move will boost earnings and income in 1997," Mr. Barakat said.

He expected dividends for this year to be distributed at a rate higher than the six per cent that was given in 1996. Mr. Barakat told the general assembly that Akarco's management has decided to raise its equities in the Jordan Islamic Bank, the Islamic Insurance Company and the Central General Storage Company. He said that Akarco had fixed deposits with the Jordan Islamic Bank to be invested with reputable companies for good returns.

The company's balance sheet at the end of 1996 showed JD5.88 million in total assets. Of these assets, JD553,200 were investments in shares and JD3.78 million in real estate, long term investments were 20.5 per cent above the 1995 figure as they reached JD27,300. Cash in hand and at banks totalled JD781,100 compared to JD636,300 in 1995.

Akarco was established in 1982 to deal in real estate projects. The capital of the company was raised from JD3.75 million to JD7.5 million in 1994 but the paid-up capital has only reached JD4.72 million. The Jordan Islamic Bank, the Orphans' Fund and the Saudi Al Barakah Company are the main shareholders in Akarco (Al Ra'i + Al Aswag).

#### National Ahlia Insurance distributes dividends at a rate of 14 per cent

**\*\* THE NATIONAL Ahlia Insurance Company will be distributing dividends at a rate of 14 per cent which translates into JD175,000. The company collected JD3.81 million in net premiums and paid JD818,496 in claims.**

The net profit generated by the company amounted to JD380,855 and the technical reserves reached JD1.14 million at the end of 1996 shareholders' equity stood at JD1.43 million.

In an extraordinary session, the general assembly approved raising the company's capital to JD2 million (Al Aswag).

## India and Oman sign fertiliser deal

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Oman and India Wednesday postponed an ambitious plan to link the two nations with a petroleum pipeline but signed a \$1.1 billion deal for an urea fertiliser project.

Diplomatic sources said the decision to postpone the pipeline project was taken in talks Wednesday between an Omani delegation headed by visiting Sultan Qaboos Bin Said and Indian experts.

Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral claimed the multi-billion dollar pipeline project has been "kept in abeyance but not shelved."

"Technology for laying deep-sea pipeline is not there at the moment and hence it is kept in abeyance till technology is available," Mr. Gujral told reporters after signing seven accords with the visiting Omani delegation.

The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding in 1993 on the ambitious project to lay a petroleum gas pipeline from Oman to India, some 3,000 metres under sea.

Muscat has spent millions of dollars in feasibility studies which are yet to be completed, sources say.

Both India and Oman have admitted there were technical problems with the under-sea project and have not specified a date for its completion.

Officials meanwhile said seven deals including the \$1.1 billion urea fertiliser project to be set up in Oman were signed on the second day of the sultan's four-day visit to India.

The accords include closer cultural and economic cooperation and an agreement on boosting bilateral investment.

The sultan of Oman told Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma that Muscat was willing to forge a strategic alliance in trade and investment with India.

The urea plant will produce 330,000 tonnes of fertiliser per year and will be funded with \$138.5 million from Oman oil, with state-run Indian companies providing the rest.

## Arabs main investors in Bahraini offshore banks

MANAMA (AFP) — Arab states emerged as the main investors in Bahraini offshore banks in 1996 while they were also the top recipients of deposits by those banks, an official report has said.

Arab deposits with the offshore units in the Gulf island state totalled around \$32.3 billion at the end of 1996, accounting for nearly 48.2 per cent of the banks' deposits of \$66.9 billion, the report by the Bahrain Monetary Agency, the central bank, said.

Western Europe was the

second biggest investor, with deposits of around \$16.8 billion. Deposits by the United States and Canada stood about at \$9.5 billion, the report, carried by the official Gulf News Agency, said.

The banks' deposits in Europe stood at around \$18 billion and those in the United States and Canada at \$10.3 billion.

The report showed the U.S. dollar accounted for 71 per cent of the total assets of the Bahraini offshore banks while Gulf currencies formed 9.3 per cent.

### THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"I hate getting older. You wouldn't believe how depressed I got the day I turned five."

### JUMBLE.

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ENYAH  
LYKIM  
YIVERF  
MINDOO

Answer here: A

### THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Anglin

Hey—this might be a good plot. WHAT AN AUTHOR USES TO CREATE A WORK OF FICTION.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: LITHE AGING GOLFER WISDOM  
Answer: What the pilot called a plane full of teen-age girls — A MAIDEN FLIGHT

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# Jordan's soccer team leaves for World Cup qualifiers Friday

## Group 3 matches against Bahrain, UAE kick off April 8

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kingdom's national soccer team Friday leaves for Bahrain for the Group 3 Asian World Cup qualifiers which kick off in Manama April 8.

This will be the fourth time Jordan plays in World Cup qualifying matches after taking part in first round qualifiers for Mexico 96, Italy 90, and U.S.A 94.

Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF) Secretary-General Hisham Asfour said the team will have its final practice session Thursday morning before leaving for Manama Friday afternoon four days before the start of their matches against Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Asfour said the team's head coaches had dropped striker Aref Hussein from the lineup in favour of Badran Al Shaqran who was expected to arrive in Amman Thursday to join the team.

Shaqran is now a professional player with Kamaz Club of the Tatar Republic.

Asfour made the comments shortly before leaving with JSF Deputy Chairman Saleh Irsheidat for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as Jordan's representatives to the General Assembly of the Asian Soccer Federation. They will then join the Kingdom's delegation April 6.

Jordan opens its matches against the UAE April 8. They will then play hosts Bahrain on the 14th.

JSF President HRH Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein will be attending the second leg of the qualifiers which start April 19 in Sharjah, UAE.

The team has just concluded a four-day training camp in Aqaba where the players underwent an intense training schedule.

Team officials said the camp in Aqaba had been successful and further boosted the players physical fitness.

The JSF had previously scheduled two games against Qatar just prior to the qualifiers so that players would adapt to the hot and humid Gulf weather. However the Qatari federation declined

because of their local league schedule.

Jordan's coach Mohammad Awad said he believed Group 3 teams are very close and that the Kingdom's team had a good chance at the qualifiers although both opponents are experienced and have prepared well.

The UAE, a 1990 World Cup qualifier, lost the latest of their two friendly matches 2-1 to Syria and 4-1 to Norway. Their other results were a 1-1 draw with Syria and a 2-1 win over Lebanon.

The Bahraini team recently lost 3-1 to Kuwait. Jordan's record in eight friendly internationals included three defeats, three goalless draws and two wins, both over Oman.

At the start of their training camps abroad the Jordanian team had two matches against Lebanon losing 1-0 in Beirut and drawing 0-0 in Amman.

Against the Iraqi team Jordan twice lost 1-0 in Baghdad while both matches against Syria ended in goalless draws.

The Kingdom's only wins were 2-0 and 4-1 in Muscat on the third leg of the team's training camps abroad.

Officials expressed uncertainty about the teams offensive and scoring abilities especially that the team seems to rely on individual efforts of top scorers, specifically Jiryes Tadoros, who scored the four goals in the 4-1 win.

The team's training camps and preparations cost the JSF over JD 60,000.

Thirty-six Asian countries will contest the first round World Cup qualifiers and have been divided into ten groups. Some groups have already begun their qualifiers.

Group 1: Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Taiwan.

Group 2: Iran, Syria, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan.

Group 3: United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain.

Group 4: Japan, Oman, Nepal, Macao.

Group 5: Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Yemen, Cambodia.

Group 6: South Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong.

Group 7: Kuwait, Lebanon, Singapore.

Group 8: China, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, Tajikistan.

Group 9: Iraq, Pakistan, Kazakhstan.

Group 10: Qatar, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines.

The 10 groups winners will qualify for the second round where the teams will be divided into two groups.

The first two from each group will then contest the Asian finals.

The first three qualify directly for the 1998 World Cup in France while the winner of a play-off between the fourth team and the Oceania Zone winner will also qualify.

Jordan's 31-member delegation includes referee Dahham Egeidat, team manager Abullatif Abdul Majid, coaches Mohammad Awad and Adnan Masud, goalkeepers' coach Basem Tayyem, Dr. Samir Sara, and physiotherapist Hussein Atallah.

The Kingdom's initial lineup includes Mu'taz Rishah, Yousef Annouri, Mohannad Mahadin, Amjad Taher, Hussein Shananeh, Faisal Ibrahim, Subhi Suleiman, Jamal Abu Abed, Adnan Awad, Nart Yada, Jiryes Tadoros and Badran Shaqran.

The team also includes Ahmad Abu Nasouh, Mohammad Abu Daoud, Mohammad Khaz'ali, Abdallah Abu Zame'h, Isam Mahmoud, Munir Abu Hantash, Bassam Al Khatib, Ahmad Khalil, Ja'far Hammad and Hassounah Sheikh.

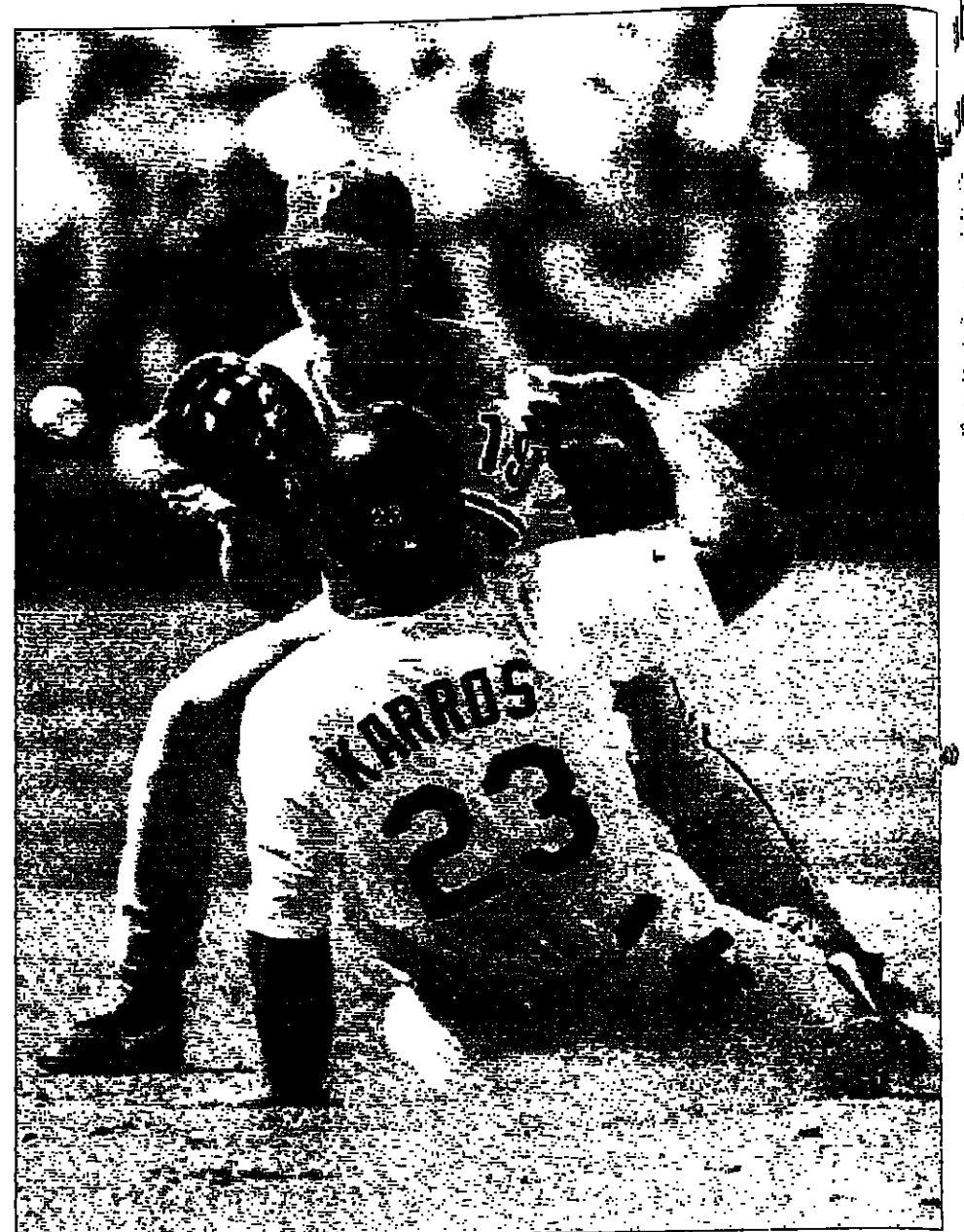
### TV coverage of Group 3 matches

#### First leg in Bahrain

Jordan — UAE April 8 5:15 p.m.  
Bahrain — UAE April 11 5:15 p.m.  
Bahrain — Jordan April 14 5:15 p.m.

#### Second leg in Sharjah

Bahrain — Jordan April 19 5:00 p.m.  
UAE — Bahrain April 22 5:00 p.m.  
UAE — Jordan April 26 5:00 p.m.



Philadelphia Phillies' shortstop Kevin Stocker has his eyes on the ball and the out as Los Angeles Dodgers' Eric Karros slides into second in the second inning, in Los Angeles. Karros was out but teammate Todd Zile took second base on an overthrow in the broken double play. Philadelphia defeated Los Angeles 3-0 (Reuters photo)

## White Sox, Marlins win as baseball season opens

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — For one day at least, Albert Belle showed that the Chicago White Sox were no April fools for shelling out \$55 million for a dominating player described as a time bomb.

The temperamental outfielder left the Cleveland Indians and signed a lucrative free agent contract with the White Sox last November, then spent training camp acting like a model citizen. He finally exploded — to the delight of his new employer.

Belle hit a pivotal two-run homer and drove in three runs to power Chicago to a 6-5 victory over the Toronto Blue Jays, one of 11 games on opening day of the 1997 baseball season.

"On today's performance, I rated an A-plus," said Belle, who did not hit a homer this spring. "I don't worry about the spring. Once everything starts, it's for keeps."

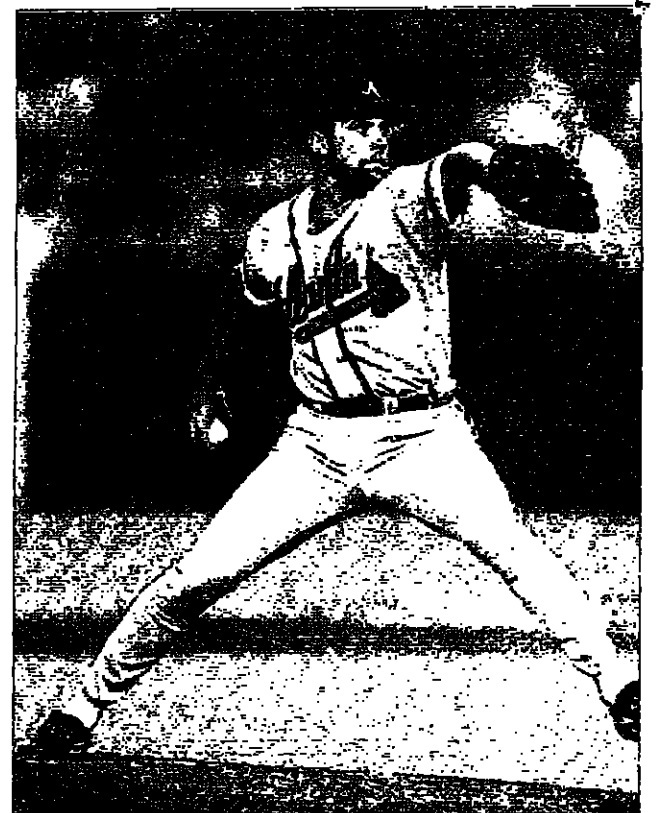
Several other quality free agents in new uniforms this season also had passing grades.

Moses Alou homered and drove in two runs to help the Florida Marlins give new manager Jim Leyland a 4-2 victory over the Chicago Cubs.

Alou, a free agent who signed a five-year, \$25 million contract during the off-season, homered in the second off Cubs starter Terry Mulholland and added a sacrifice fly in a two-run fifth.

Alou was part of an \$89 million spending spree by the Marlins, who also gave Leyland \$7.5 million to manage them over the next five years. He won three division titles in 11 years with the Pittsburgh Pirates.

A far more modestly priced free agent made the cost-conscious Pirates a winner in their first game under Gene Lamont, who took over when Leyland departed for south Florida. Kevin Elster, who signed with the pirates for \$1.65



Atlanta Braves' pitcher John Smoltz aims for a strike during first inning action against the Houston Astros. Houston defeated Atlanta 2-1 (Reuters photo)

million, delivered a two-run double to break a seventh-inning tie in Pittsburgh's 5-2 victory at San Francisco.

The Philadelphia Phillies, like Pittsburgh, are not expected to be in the pennant chase this season, but they also won their first game under a new field boss.

Curt Schilling allowed two infield hits while striking out 11 over eight innings as the Phillies handed the Los Angeles Dodgers their first opening day shutout loss in 27 years, 3-0. The beneficiary was Terry Francona, who took over as manager after serving as third base coach for the Detroit tigers, a team that lost 109 games last season.

The 1997 season opened with a new twist — a so-called "warm-weather schedule" that attempted to maximise the number of clubs starting the year in temperate conditions.

Ken Griffey Jr. hit a pair of home runs and drove in three and Jeff Fassero allowed five hits over seven innings in his American League debut as the Mariners beat the Yankees 4-1.

The Mariners have now won 12 of the last 14 meetings with the Yankees at the Kingdome.

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## Sacchi backs Juventus

MILAN (AFP) — AC Milan chief Arrigo Sacchi heaped praise on Serie A rivals Juventus on Wednesday, rating them the best team in the world and Marcello Lippi the best coach.

But Sacchi, whose side face the Intercontinental Cup holders here on Sunday, said he still had faith in his own team — including Roberto Baggio — and claimed he had better individuals than Lippi.

Asked if he believed Juventus were the best team in the world, Sacchi said: "Generally speaking, that's how you would describe the Intercontinental Cup winners."

"A team becomes great and sets an example to the others when it wins convincingly, and that's what Juventus are doing now."

Sacchi's Italian champions have recently hit a winning streak and are back in the race for a UEFA Cup slot next season, despite using Baggio only to keep the substitutes' bench warm.

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## Dubai World Cup on track after desert flood

DUBAI (R) — The sun is shining, the track is dry and everything is on course for the delayed Dubai World Cup on Thursday after a deluge forced big race host Sheikh Mohammad to abandon the event last Saturday.

"The track is perfect," race committee chairman Michael Osborne said Wednesday as the 12 runners in the \$4 million event, the world's richest race for thoroughbreds, worked out in bright sunshine on Dubai's sand track.

"In fact, we're going to seal the track until tomorrow to hold some of the moisture in," he said.

Race organisers have been studying weather patterns and keeping their fingers crossed since Saturday when more rain fell in two hours than usually comes down on this hot Gulf Arab city in a whole winter.

The forecast for Thursday is "abundant sunshine". The race takes place over 2,000 metres of desert sand under floodlights at 1535 GMT. It will be all over in two minutes.

The event, which officials estimate cost \$10 million to put on, is timed to ensure maximum possible coverage on television in Britain, where most betting interest is centred because of a ban on gambling in the United Arab Emirates.

Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, the world's most successful owner-breeder and host of the Dubai World Cup, had watched dismayed as Saturday's downpour turned the track into a quagmire and hundreds of bedraggled celebrities and guests sought shelter from

the storm.

The Sheikh, UAE minister of defence with the rank of general, ordered a military helicopter to hover over the dirt track at Dubai's Nad Al-Sheba course to help dry it out.

Combined with sunshine and the absence of any further rain, that little trick seems to have worked.

California trainer Richard Mandella, who saddled second-placed Soul of the Matter to finish just half a length behind Cigar in last year's inaugural World Cup, gave his two first and second favourites Siphon and Sandpit a good look at the parade ring on Wednesday after hacking to the winning post.

Then they cantered from the 800 metre pole to the wire.

The two Brazil-bred professional dirt horses are rated 11-4 and 7-2 by British bookies to take the gold cup and \$2.4 million first prize.

Formal Gold, the lightly-raced William Perry-trained U.S. colt, has moved up to become third favourite at 4-1 from 6-1, offering the prospect of another 1-2-3 result for the United States just like last year.

French-trained Helissio, European champion and winner of the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, withdrew when Saturday's thunderstorm began.

Latest odds from Ladbrokes: 11-4 Siphon, 7-2 Sandpit, 4-1 Formal Gold, 6-1 Singpiel, 8-1 Kammtarra, 8-1 Flomensfirth, 14-1 Key Of Luck, 20-1 Hukoto Vega, 33-1 Bijou d'Inde, Even Top, Luso, 40-1 Juggler.

## Barcelona win in controversial finish

BARCELONA (R) — Barcelona set-up a third and decisive leg of their European Championship quarter-final with Bologna on Tuesday as a last-gasp triple-shot which would have won the tie for the Italians was controversially ruled out.

The Spaniards' 75-73 victory means that qualification for the final four will go down to a third game to be played on Thursday in Bologna, where the Italians won 70-65 last week.

But Teamsystem Bologna will claim they should already be through from a match that ended in total confusion.

They had whittled a gap of 16 points at the break down to just three when Oscar Myer was fouled with four seconds on the clock.

Eric Murdock made the first free throw but deliberately missed the second to allow the chance of a three-pointer. In the ensuing scrum Bologna regained possession and got the ball to Dan Gay.

He landed his throw but as he began his celebrations the score was ruled out — apparently for a foul by gay.

The Teamsystem players and officials were incensed at the decision, especially top-scorer Carlton Myers who paced up and down outside

the referees' changing room for five minutes after the game.

The chaos continued as Barcelona's Arturas Kamishovos returned to the court to take two free shots after it was realised Gay's foul was his fifth. However, before he could begin the team managers met and decided it was a pointless exercise.

Barcelona lost last year's final to Panathinaikos in high drama in the dying seconds.

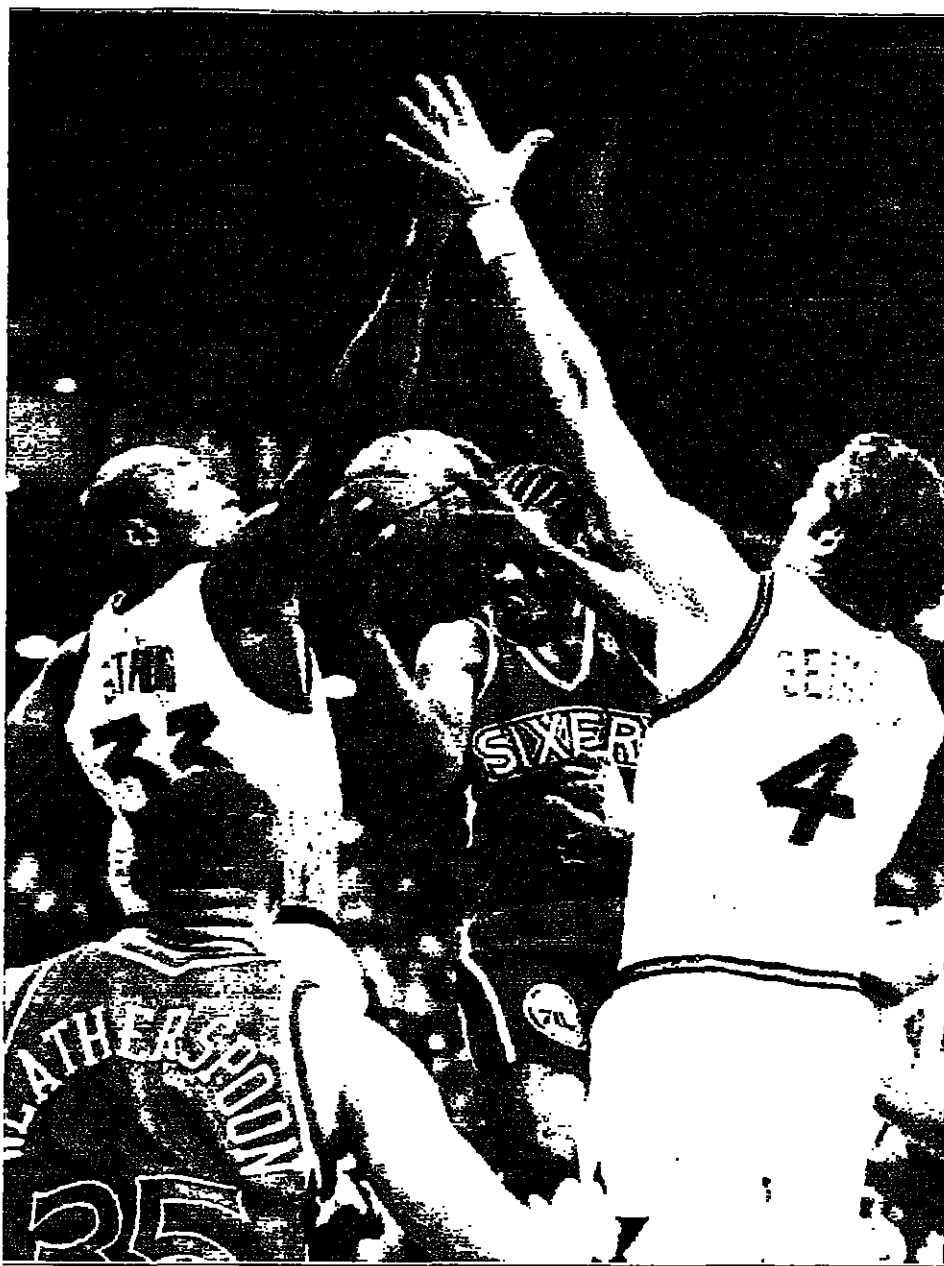
"We're fed up with last-minute controversies... It would have been unjust if Teamsystem had won after we had been 16 points ahead," said Barcelona coach Aito Garcia.

Meanwhile, Olimpija from Ljubljana beat Italy's Stefanel Milan 73-69 to set up a third leg decider in Milan Thursday.

Milan won the first leg last week 94-90 against a team generally thought to have one of the best defences around.

On Tuesday, they lived up more to that reputation, relinquishing the ball only eight times, compared to 20 by the Italian club.

Olimpija's top scorer was Aerial McDonald with 14 points, while Warren Kidd led Stefanel with 24, but to no avail.



Philadelphia 76ers' guard Allen Iverson makes his move toward the basket against Orlando Magic forward Derrick Strong and centre Rony Seikaly, in the Orlando Arena. Philadelphia defeated Orlando 105-93 (Reuters photo)

## Lakers close in on 1st-place Seattle with narrow win

SEATTLE (R) — The Los Angeles Lakers closed within half a game of first-place Seattle in the Pacific Division by edging the超音速 (Sonics) 99-97 on Tuesday.

Nick Van Exel scored 14 of his 30 points in the third quarter and sank three free throws in the final minute to seal the Lakers' victory.

Eddie Jones scored 20 points and Jerome Kersey added 14 and 11 rebounds for the Lakers, who overcame injuries to forwards Travis Knight and Elden Campbell.

Shawn Kemp had 21 points and 10 rebounds for the Sonics, who have dropped three of their last four games. Kemp passed 10,000 career points with a basket in the first quarter.

Seattle trailed by 15 points in the third quarter but Detlef Schrempf made a three-pointer and jumper to pull Seattle within 96-95 with 1:04 left.

Van Exel made two free throws 12 seconds later and added another to clinch the win.

In Miami, Tim Hardaway and Voshon Lenard scored 26 points apiece to lead the red-hot heat to a 97-87 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers for their ninth victory in 10 games.

Alonzo Mourning had 17 points and 12 rebounds and Hardaway dished out 13 assists for the heat, who remained 2 1/2 games ahead of second-place New York in the Atlantic Division.

Loy Vaught had 24 points and 11 rebounds for the Clippers, who dropped to 0-4 on their seven-game road trip and lead the Sacramento Kings by just two games in the race for the Western Conference playoff berth.

In Cleveland, Patrick Ewing scored 16 of his 21 points in the second half and John Starks sank a key three-pointer with 78 seconds left as the New York Knicks beat the Cavaliers 94-88 to keep pace with the heat in the Atlantic division.

In Dallas, Grant Hill tied career highs with 35 points and 18 rebounds as the Detroit Pistons coasted to a 100-82 victory over the Mavericks, who suffered their eighth straight defeat.

The surprising pistons reached the 50-win mark for the first time since the 1990-91 season.

In Chicago, Michael Jordan scored 12 of his 21 points in the first quarter and Jason Caffey and Toni Kukoc netted 16 points each as the Bulls beat the hapless Boston Celtics 111-106 for their eighth straight win.

The Bulls won their 29th successive home game and are four wins from tying the best home record in NBA history of 40-1, set by the 1985-86 Celtics.

David Wesley scored 31 points and Antoine Walker chipped in 27 for Boston, loser of 14 of its last 15 games.

In Orlando, Mark Davis scored 27 points and Jerry

Stackhouse added 22 as the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Magic 105-93 for their first three-game winning streak since the first month of the season.

Penny Hardaway scored 30 points, but just seven in the second half and Rony Seikaly added 26 and 19 rebounds for Orlando.

In Denver, Clyde Drexler scored 24 points and Mario Elie and Matt Maloney added 19 apiece to lead the Houston rockets to a 116-99 win over the Nuggets.

Hakeem Olajuwon, who averaged 43 points in the first three games against Denver this season, was held to 12.

Houston (49-23) kept pace with the Lakers for the third spot in the Western Conference playoff race.

At Indiana, Rod Strickland had 18 points and 11 assists as the Washington Bullets beat the Pacers 104-100 to move into a tie with Cleveland for the final playoff spot in the east.

In Portland, Mark Price scored 24 points and Latrell Sprewell added 22 as the Golden State Warriors snapped the Trail Blazers' 10-game home win streak with a 91-82 victory.

In Vancouver, Glenn Robinson scored 25 points and Sherman Douglas added 21 to lead the Milwaukee Bucks to a 102-91 victory over the woeful Grizzlies.

## Hingis wins first match as World No. 1

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, South Carolina (R) — Martina Hingis played her first match as the No. 1

player in the world on Tuesday and breezed into the third round of the Family Circle Cup tennis tournament.

The 16-year-old Swiss phenom, who took over the top ranking from Steffi Graf on Monday, scored a 6-0 6-4 victory over Barbara Rittner of Germany to run her 1997 match record to a perfect 27-0. The top-seeded Hingis, who received a first-round bye at the season's first clay court event, admitted to being a bit overwhelmed by her pre-match introduction.

"It was strange," Hingis said. "The first time they said these two words number one... I almost couldn't believe it was true."

Earlier Tuesday, fourth seed Monica Seles, who lost the Lipton final to Hingis Saturday and the record as the youngest player ever to be ranked number one, shook the rust off her clay court game to record a swift second-round victory over Shi-Ting Wang of Taiwan. After a bit of a tentative start, Seles posted a 6-3 6-3 win in 57 minutes.

"It was the first time I got to play some points on clay and I was pretty rusty starting off," said Seles, who is playing just her second tournament of the year.

"We had some nice rallies in there, so it was a good comfortable second round match," the fifth-ranked Seles said.

Hingis, already looking for her sixth title of the year, had to rally from 0-2 down in the second set after sailing through the first. But the Australian Open champion did not

attribute the closer second set to her opponent's play.

"I just played so well and I made everything right in the first set and I lost my concentration (in the second set) because I got so bored out there," she admitted.

Seles was pleased with her progress after having her start to the season delayed while recuperating from a broken figure she suffered in December.

"I feel like I'm playing well comparing how many weeks I've played," Seles said, "but there's still a lot of work ahead of me if I want to be ready for the French (open) and Wimbledon."

In another second-round match, fifth-seeded two-time champion Conchita Martinez of Spain pulled out a 6-7 6-4 6-3 victory over qualifier Olga Barabanschikova of Belarus.

The tournament features nine of the top-10 ranked players with only injured Graf missed from the ranks of the elite.

In a first-round encounter, Jennifer Capriati took another step forward in her halting comeback efforts by upsetting 11th-seeded Mary Joe Fernandez 6-3 4-6 7-6 in a match that featured 18 service breaks. The 21-year-old Capriati, who once looked to have a future as bright as Hingis', reached the final here in 1990 as a 14-year-old.

"I'm glad I was able to pull it out," said Capriati, now ranked 28th, "because I think it's matches like that really give you so much confidence that you can pull out those close ones."

## German classic cars tour Jordan this week

By Roufan Nahhas  
Special to The Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanian classic car lovers will be able to take a glimpse at a number of classic cars coming to the Kingdom from Germany for a short visit.

The Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ) said that the group will arrive Jordan Saturday April 5.

"The cars will reach Jordan after a long journey which took them from Europe to Greece and then Israel," RACJ's Hassan Ala'eddin Wednesday told a press conference.

A full schedule awaits the members of the Lufthansa Club who will be visiting tourist sites in Jordan.

"The group, driving their classic cars will visit Ajloun, Petra and Kan Zaman," Mr. Ala'eddin said.

The door is open to Jordanian classic car owners to join the convoy. "Any Jordanian with a classic car can join the group," Ala'eddin said.

"Ammanites can also take a look at the cars parked outside the Forte Grand Hotel for a couple of hours on Sunday," he said.

Cars such as 1968 SAAB, 1949 Jaguar XK 120, 1928 Rolls Royce Phantom I and 1967 Porsche 912 Targa SWB will be touring the Jordan on their four-day visit.

Khalidoun Al Hmoud, a member of the club, said it is a great chance to visit Jordan "the old-fashioned way."

"The group is here to see the touristic sites in Jordan in a different way — using our classic cars," Al Hmoud said.

Ministry of Tourism representative Khaled Nsour said that the ministry will provide all support for the group.

"The ministry will accompany the group all the time to provide everything they need," he said.

"Promoting tourism in Jordan is our main goal as a great number of tourists coming to visit Jordan are from Germany," he added.

Herbert Kruger from the German Embassy said that the members of the group are amateurs with only a hobby in mind.

"The group consists of members who love classic cars and like to share this hobby with people around the world," he pointed out.

RACJ has given Jordan a taste from the past in their classic cars exhibitions through the past years when classic cars shows were organised by the special committee at RACJ.

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## Jordan deserves more external aid — Clinton

### U.S. help expected to have figured high in King's White House meeting

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — U.S. President Bill Clinton indicated before talks with His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday that his administration would consider economic assistance to Jordan, which he described as not having received much external aid despite its key role in the Middle East peace process, but he did not give specifics.

It was not immediately clear on Wednesday whether Mr. Clinton made any definite commitment during the White House meeting with the King, but he said before the talks that U.S. assistance to Jordan was one of the issues he was to discuss with the King.

Jordanian officials here would not comment, but reports have said that the King would raise the issue of economic and military assistance during the talks.

Jordan and the U.S. are expected to sign a bilateral investment treaty on Thursday. Officials describe the document as one of the key vehicles to channel American investments to Jordan.

In his comments to the press on Wednesday, President Clinton, answering a question on how he envisaged continued cooperation with and support for Jordan, paid tribute to the Kingdom's efforts for peace in the Middle East.

"I think that Jordan has done as much to keep the Middle East peace process alive and moving forward as any nation, without much — frankly, without much assistance from the outside world," said the president. "And I believe that we should do more, and that's another thing I want to discuss with His Majesty, what other steps we can take and how we might go about getting that done."

American officials have said that they understand Jordan's argument that Jordanians have yet to see tangible benefits of peace in terms of their daily life but that a dramatic increase in American financial assistance to the Kingdom was not possible, given problems in getting approval from Congress.

Since the Middle East peace process was launched in 1991, Washington has repeatedly said it was committed to helping Jordan's economic development. It has also taken several measures, both in terms of direct assistance as well as indirect help in streamlining the Jordanian economy and helping the Kingdom's economic restructuring programme.

Officials also say that Washington has been a strong force behind lobbying other donors, notably Japan and some European countries, to assist Jordan and also to respond positively to the Kingdom's efforts to reduce its debt burden.

According to figures made available to the Jordan Times by the U.S. embassy in Amman, the U.S. government has provided grants, loans and loan guarantees, worth \$1.05 billion to Jordan since 1990. Included in the total is an expected allocation of \$107 million in 1997.

The figures included:

Aid given through the United Nations Agency for International Development: \$161.7 million, accounting for 9.8 per cent of the total assistance in the seven years. A year-by-year split showed \$3.7 million in 1990, \$31.15 million in 1991, none in 1992, \$65 million in 1993, \$28 million in 1994, \$12.2 million in 1995 and \$7.2 million in 1996. Planned aid through this channel in 1997 is \$14.5 million.

Agricultural commodity credit guarantees: \$317 million (\$137 million in 1990, \$30 million each in 1991 and 1992, none in 1993, \$35 million in 1994, \$15 million in 1995 and \$30 million in 1996). Planned aid for 1997 is \$14.5 million.

Military assistance: \$371.943 million. (\$69.859 million in 1990, \$21.095 million in 1991, \$20.585 million in 1992, \$9.501 million in 1993, \$9.8 million in 1994, \$8.303 million in 1995 and \$20.12 million in 1996). Planned aid for 1997 is \$31.6 million.

(Military assistance for 1996 includes \$100 million for F-16 fighters to be delivered beginning this year and \$100 million for military equipment delivered to Jordan in December 1996).

Funding for economic feasibility studies extended through the Trade and Development Agency (TDA): \$874,000 (\$500,000 in 1995 and \$374,000 in 1996).

Soft loans for agricultural commodity imports (PL-480): \$116 million (\$20 million in 1992, \$30 million in 1993, and \$15 million each in 1994, 1995 and 1996. Planned credit under this programme for 1997 is \$21 million).

Debt forgiveness: \$637.128 million (\$219.947 million in 1994 and \$417.181 million in 1995). None is planned for 1997.

Agricultural commodity grant in kind: \$45.308 million (\$13.285 million in 1990, \$22.895 million in 1992 and \$9.128 million in 1993 and none since then).

The figures showed that Jordan received — \$223.844 million in 1990 — \$105.140 million in 1991 — \$79.713 million in 1992 — \$104.501 million in 1993 — \$307.747 million in 1994 — \$468.184 million in 1995 — \$253.774 million in 1996 — \$107.1 million for 1997 (planned).

In addition to the grants and loans, Washington has also given preferential treatment to Jordan in several areas. These include an "Open Skies" agreement under which Jordanian air carriers are allowed to fly in and out of the United States without any restrictions on frequency or destination. Jordan is the only country to receive such U.S. treatment other than European countries.

The Clinton administration has also granted the Kingdom the status of a non-North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) ally that gives "priority consideration" for its requests for advanced military technology and equipment.

## Iraqis begin receiving extra flour

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqis on Wednesday began receiving extra flour rations after the government released its strategic stock with the arrival of the first wheat shipments under the oil-for-food deal with the United Nations.

Iraqis were seen buying nine kilograms of flour per person at give-away prices from a government agent in Baghdad's Al Salam neighbourhood. Officials said agents elsewhere had also begun selling the new rations.

The previous ration was seven kilograms per person.

"Today is the first day" for the new rations, Abbas Fadil Omar said after taking the new supplies to his wife who is a government agent in Al Salam, a poor neighbourhood with garbage strewn over the streets.

Customers like Tawfiq Mahmoud, who is retired, said 10 kilograms for each member of his family would be better and complained the new rations he was buying were "too little".

A government subsidised bag of nine kilograms of flour sells for 50 dinars while the same bag on the free market would cost 3,600 dinars. One dollar fetches 1,200 dinars.

Iraq announced Monday it would increase flour rations in April as the first of around 14 ships began arriving at Iraq's



Iraqi women gather wheat flour given to them within the food ration system in Baghdad, on Wednesday. The allocated amount was increased from 7kg to 9kg under an agreement which was signed by the U.N. and Iraq with further increases on the ration card expected to follow (Reuters photo)

Gulf port of Umm Qasr with French and Australian wheat.

While the wheat is being unloaded and transported to flour mills, the government released its strategic stockpile of 40,000 tonnes of flour.

The Ministry of Trade then invited all government agents to come to the warehouses to collect the new quotas and distribute them to their customers.

U.N. officials said the flour

contained in the strategic stockpile is a high-quality product from Argentina.

One ship has also delivered Thai rice in Umm Qasr, while hundreds of trucks have delivered thousands more tonnes of chick peas, cooking oil, white beans and salt from Turkey and Jordan since March 20.

The trade ministry source said the distribution of the those and other commodities

would begin in May.

Under the terms of the oil-for-food deal, the first easing of sanctions since they were imposed after the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Iraq can export \$2 billion of oil over six months.

The proceeds are earmarked for purchases of humanitarian goods, as well as to defray UN costs and compensate victims of the invasion.

## 'Arafat has \$151 million Tel Aviv account'

TEL AVIV (AP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has set up a Tel Aviv bank account with \$151 million in deposits and plans to use the money in case of an uprising against him, an Israeli daily reported Wednesday.

Only Mr. Arafat and his top economic aide can sign on the account, the Haaretz daily said.

Arafat spokesmen could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

The account is one of several that were set up by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) for Israeli deposits of various taxes Israel collected from Palestinians and then transferred to the PNA.

The accounts were opened as a result of the 1994 autonomy accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the Israeli

finance minister at the time, Avraham Shohat, said Wednesday.

Mr. Shohat said Israel transferred taxes collected for Palestinian oil imports to the Tel Aviv account, while other money was sent to accounts in the Gaza Strip.

Haaretz, quoting from an internal document by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), said the Tel Aviv account is not under the control of the Palestinian Finance Ministry.

Haaretz said, without giving details, that Mr. Arafat uses some of the money in Tel Aviv to circumvent international supervision of his expenses, financed in great part by donor countries.

An unidentified high-ranking Israeli official told Haaretz that the account is also intended as an emergency fund. In case of an uprising against Mr. Arafat, the Tel Aviv account would finance the Palestinian leader's escape and help him set up abroad, the official told Haaretz.

Maher Kurd, the deputy Palestinian trade minister, told Haaretz that the PNA had the right to set up such a fund.

Mr. Shohat said it was not up to Israel to interfere in Palestinian affairs.

"We were given the bank account number and we must execute the agreement. How the economic system works in the Palestinian Authority is their problem. We have our own problems," Mr. Shohat said.

## Jordanian wins discrimination case against United Airlines

AMMAN (J.T.) — In what could be deemed as a first-of-its-kind decision, a California jury recently awarded a Jordanian-American employee more than \$2.9 million in economic, emotional and punitive damages for workplace discrimination based on religion and national origin, a Washington-based Islamic advocacy group said.

According to a press release issued by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the case was started by Ahmad Abu Aziz against the American carrier United Airlines Inc., where Mr. Abu Aziz was employed since 1994.

According to Mr. Abu Aziz's attorney, John Riley, the discriminatory treatment began within the first two months of employment.

In court, Mr. Abu Aziz reported being compared to a "terrorist" and receiving unfair work assignments. His colleagues ridiculed the sound of his name and made derogatory comments about his religion and national origin, the CAIR statement said.

When Mr. Abu Aziz reported the abuse to his supervisor, his complaints were trivialised and no meaningful measures were taken to prevent further abuse. Six weeks after filing his complaint, he was fired.

In terminating his employment, United Airlines allegedly relied on false statements from co-workers accusing him of misconduct on the job.

Following a two-week trial, "the jury determined that United's reliance on false accusations to terminate Mr. Abu Aziz's employment was a cover-up designed to avoid revealing a discriminatory decision," the CAIR statement said.

The jury awarded \$246,201 in economic damages, \$50,000 in damages for emotional distress and assessed punitive damages in the amount of \$2,670,000.

"I feel vindicated. Justice has been served," Mr. Abu Aziz told CAIR, appealing on all Muslim workers in non-Muslim countries not to accept discriminatory behaviour on the job and asking them to educate colleagues about Islam and Islamic culture. He also blamed the media for creating many anti-Muslim and anti-Arab stereotypes, CAIR added.

"The Muslim community must now demand that United Airlines change its internal policies in light of this decision," said CAIR Executive Director Nihad Awad. "If a Muslim employee of an airline is stereotyped because of his religion and national origin, what does that say about the treatment Muslim travellers will receive?" Mr. Awad commented.

According to Mr. Awad, CAIR receives many complaints from American Muslims and Arab Americans about so-called "profiling" of airline passengers. "In most of these cases, the travellers report being unfairly singled out for special security procedures," the CAIR statement added.

CAIR has produced a booklet entitled "An Employer's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices" and published other material on American Muslim civil rights.

## Prosecutor: Israel is pondering what to do with Abu Marzouk

NEW YORK (Agencies) — A prosecutor has acknowledged that the "ongoing peace process" in the Middle East is a factor in whether Israel will follow through on its request to extradite Musa Abu Marzouk, a political leader of Hamas.

Assistant U.S. attorney Baruch Weiss told U.S. District Judge Denise L. Cote on Tuesday that he has given Israel until Sunday to make up its mind whether to extradite Mr. Abu Marzouk.

"It is no secret, your honour, this extradition is complicated by the ongoing peace process," Mr. Weiss said. "Israel has made it clear they want all the time they are entitled to."

Mr. Abu Marzouk, 46, announced in January that he was willing to go to Israel to face charges of conspiracy to commit murder because he had given up hope that he could successfully resist extradition in U.S. courts.

A court hearing in Manhattan was held Tuesday because Mr. Abu Marzouk's lawyer, Michael Kennedy, demanded in court papers that his client be released because 60 days had passed since he gave up his fight against extradition.

Mr. Weiss argued that the 60-day mark does not actually pass until Sunday and that Mr. Abu Marzouk could continue to be held anyway because another appeal by him was never formally dropped.

Judge Cote ordered the two sides to submit briefs on the matter and set the next hearing tentatively for Monday.

"This is probably the first case in the annals of United States extradition practice where a person is ordered extradited and is willing to be extradited and the government refuses to extradite or release him

for political reasons, preferring instead to keep him confined in perpetual limbo in federal jail," Mr. Marzouk's petition for release states.

Mr. Weiss said Mr. Abu Marzouk would not be freed even if the judge ruled against the government. He said the U.S. Immigration and Naturalisation Service still has an exclusion case pending against him and would take him into custody.

Mr. Abu Marzouk, who has lived in the U.S. for 15 years, was arrested at New York airport in 1995 because his name had recently been added to a list of suspected "terrorists." A federal judge later found there was cause to believe he was involved in 10 attacks in Israel from 1990 to 1994 in which 47 people were killed and 148 injured.

Mr. Abu Marzouk has denied involvement in planning or financing attacks.

Recent Israeli press reports have said secret contacts were under way send Mr. Abu Marzouk to Jordan or Egypt or Yemen, if Israel decides not to receive him.

The militant group Hamas has threatened new attacks should Mr. Abu Marzouk be extradited to Israel to stand trial.

Israel did not contend that Mr. Abu Marzouk personally committed any of the violent acts, but charged he was criminally liable because of his high-level role in allegedly directing, controlling and financially supporting Hamas's activities.

Mr. Abu Marzouk has a home and business in Virginia, but U.S. and Israeli authorities charged he frequently travelled to the Middle East to promote violence and undermine peace efforts.

## Yemeni gunman's body to be crucified

SANAA (AFP) — A Yemeni appeals court on Wednesday upheld the death sentence against a man convicted of shooting dead six people at two schools and ordered the public crucifixion of his body at the site of the rampage.

Muhammad Al Nadhiri, 42, a building contractor, was sentenced to death by firing squad at a lightning trial Monday. Just one day after opening fire with a Kalashnikov assault rifle on teachers and students at two schools in Sanaa.

The appeals court upheld the verdict on Wednesday and said that because of the "particularly odious" nature of the crime Nadhiri should be crucified after facing the firing squad.

It said his body would be displayed for three days at a location between the two schools.

Nadhiri said he carried out the massacre to avenge the rape of his eight-year-old daughter by an administrator at the Taleah School, where he began his shooting spree on Sunday.

The court rejected his defence after a medical examination of his daughter. Legal experts said Nadhiri could still appeal to the supreme court of appeal, and as a last resort make a plea for clemency from President Ali Abdullah Salch.

## Kuwait arrests Bahraini Hizbollah-Gulf suspects

MANAMA (AFP) — Eleven Bahrainis arrested last week in Kuwait are members of Hizbollah-Gulf, a subversive organisation allegedly backed by Iran, the Bahraini newspaper Al Ayam reported on Wednesday.

The newspaper said the detained Bahrainis, students or workers between the ages of 22 and 27, had held secret meetings "aimed at threatening" the security of Bahrain and other Gulf states and "inciting unrest."

Al Ayam, citing Kuwaiti sources, said members of the group were in contact with unidentified groups outside Kuwait by fax machine and telephone and had distributed videotapes and pamphlets harmful to the security of Bahrain and other Gulf states.

Security officials told the newspaper that the Kuwaiti authorities would deport the members of the group or put them on trial.

Al Ayam said Kuwait was in contact with a number of Gulf states to "find the extent of the cell's activities and links."

The Kuwaiti Interior Ministry said last week that a group of non-Kuwaitis had been rounded up on March 26 for planning "to carry out illegal acts harmful to the security of the country."

The Kuwaiti daily Al Watan reported that 11 Bahrainis had been arrested for "gathering donations without permission and distributing illegal publications" against the government in Bahrain.

In Kuwait City, a Kuwaiti human rights lawyer said Wednesday that he was

examining a claim that Bahrainis were being held after a security swoop.

Mustapha Al Sarraf, a member of the non-governmental Kuwait Society for Human Rights, said he had received a claim on Tuesday that four Bahrainis have been arrested.

The Kuwaiti lawyer said he thought more than four people were being held, but said he was still trying to confirm the four arrests and search for more information before determining a course of action.

"I am still trying to find more information ... (when) I have the information then we will decide what to do," Mr. Sarraf told AFP, adding that he was working alongside a second lawyer from the human rights society.

Without disclosing his source, Mr. Sarraf listed the Bahrainis allegedly arrested as Mohammad Mirza, Khalil Al Shuwaikh, Abdul Nabi Al Asfour and Rashed Abdullah.

Unrest erupted in Bahrain in December 1994 spearheaded by Shiites demanding the restoration of the parliament which the authorities suspended in 1975. At least 26 people have died.

The Bahraini government has accused Iran of backing a group called Hizbollah-Bahrain seeking to overthrow the government. Iran has denied the charges.

Hizbollah-Gulf has been linked in press reports to a bombing at a U.S. military base in Saudi Arabia in June 1996 which left 19 U.S. servicemen dead.



## Barwoman nearly cuts off non-paying customer

SHILLONG, India, (AFP) — A Indian barwoman decided to cut off a customer in this far-eastern city after he refused to pay up — by taking a knife and trying to sever his penis, police and witnesses said Wednesday. The man, who was drunk, told the female bar owner he had no funds, so she decided to take the matter into her own hands, a witness said. "The lady who owns the shop caught hold of him ... soon the man was writing in pain and we realised his private part was half gone," he said. A doctor said the victim was recuperating in hospital after surgery. "He is lucky his penis was not completely severed," Police said the barowner went into hiding after Sunday's attack.

## Hostages will have 30 more days to pay taxes

LIMA (R) — Their predicament may have evoked international sympathy, but the plight of the hostages held inside the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima for 105 days apparently holds little sway with the tax man. The Peruvian tax office, the Sunat, said the roughly 50 hostages who are Peruvian citizens who have one month after their release, whenever that is, to pay their 1996 income taxes. Peruvians must file their 1996 returns by April 2, but people inside the besieged residence need "a period that allows them to comply with the filing of their annual tax statements," the statement said.

## Monument to last tsar destroyed by bomb

MOSCOW (R) — A bomb obliterated Moscow's only monument to Russia's last tsar, Nicholas II, a 10-metre bronze statue erected only last year. "A preliminary investigation has proved that the explosion was carried out in a very professional way. Practically nothing is left from the monument," said a spokesman for the Moscow office of the federal security service (FSB). "It was a senseless act of vandalism." ITAR-TASS news agency quoted Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin as saying, "One can have differing views of the last Russian emperor, but this senseless, barbaric act cannot strike out pages of our country's history." The statue, showing Nicholas wearing a crown and regalia, was erected last year in a remote spot in northeast Moscow that reflected official uncertainty towards the tsar.

## Brits learn naked truth about 'tolerant' Dutch

ROTTERDAM (R) — Police said they were called to resolve a "cultural misunderstanding" at the weekend after a group of British tourists stripped naked amid picnicking Dutch families on a riverside promenade. "It was a beautiful day and this group of around 20 young British tourists thought it would be quite acceptable to strip and stroll around in their birthday suits," a police spokeswoman said. Police intervened after residents objected and an argument ensued, she said. The youths dressed hastily and left by taxi after protesting they thought it was normal to strip in the Netherlands, known for its tolerant attitude towards sex and soft drugs.